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# Sierra Life

THE MAGAZINE OF THE HIGH SIERRA

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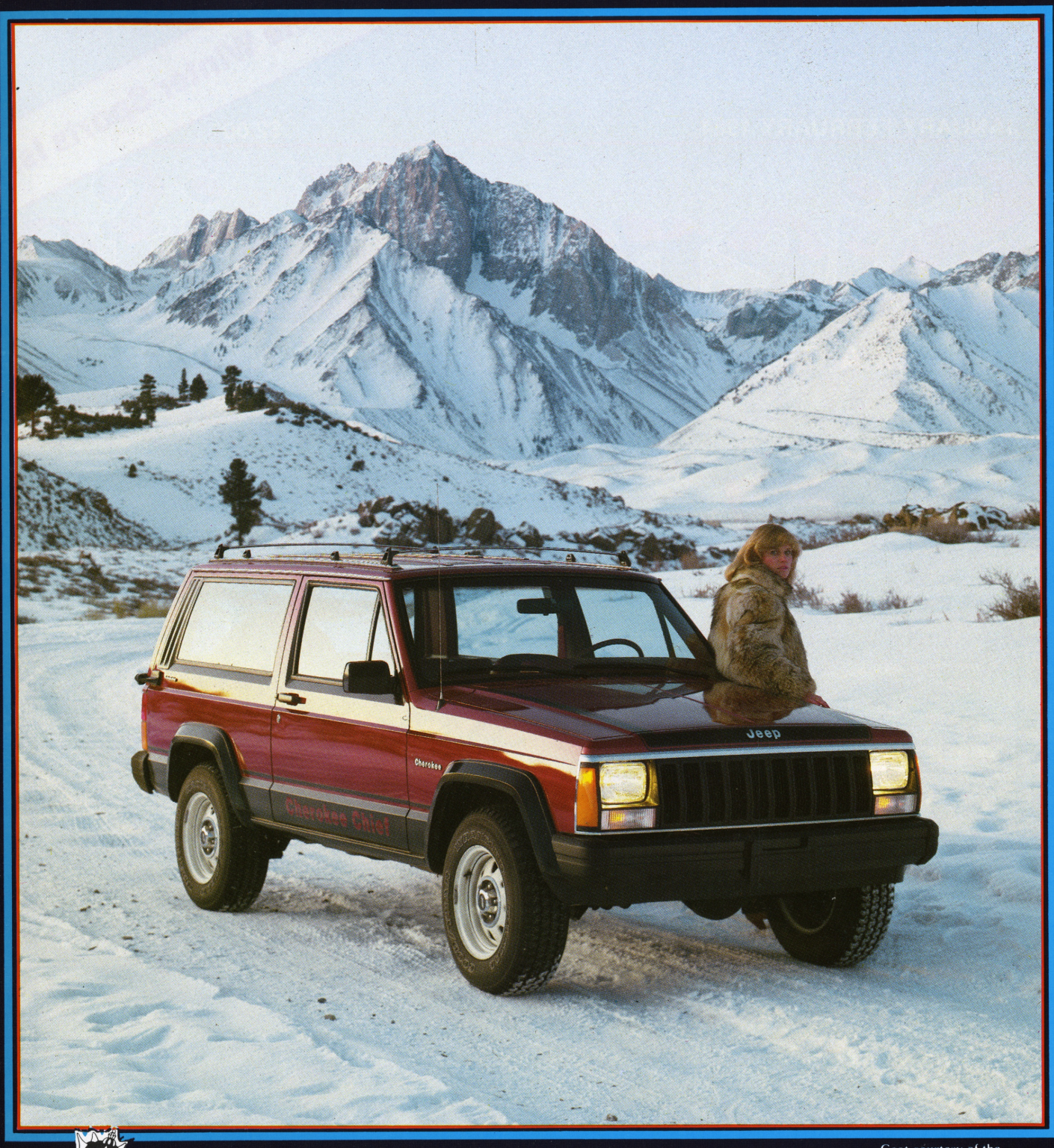
Owens River • Pink Snow • Ice Climbing

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*As I picked myself up I noticed a madman approaching from behind. . . ski tips down. I was about to learn my lesson twice. As we untangled skis and egos, I thanked him for not killing me.*

*My trip down the mountain was one of those epic adventures that only seeing would make you believe. I am now a legend among skiers with my famous "bun run."*

*Will I try it again? Sure, why not. I like living dangerously. I publish a magazine, don't I?*

*Sandie Pramann*
*PUBLISHER*

*Our cover: The cornice at Mammoth Mountain on a perfect day for skiing. Photo by Jim Stroup.*


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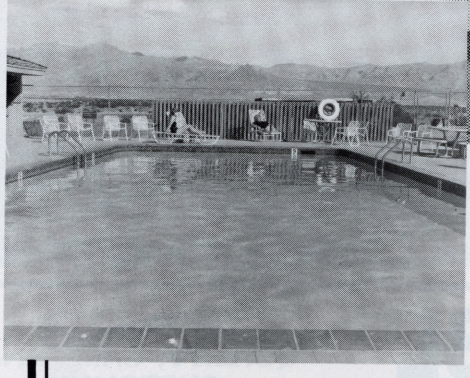

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# Letters to the Editor

**Sheep Trailing**

*Alfred Rosalin Giraud, born in Hyeres, France in 1882, died in 1967 and buried in the Big Pine Cemetery beside his brother, Pierre Joseph Giraud, the "Little Pete" of Mary Austin fame, was the chief inspiration for my article, "Sheep Trailing, A Vanishing Way of Life" (August/September 1983).*

*We had many long talks the winter Alfred spent in Inyokern in the early 1960s and again later at his home in Bishop.*

*Please include this (additional information) about Alfred Giraud, who was so important a figure in sheepherding in the first half of this century in the Owens Valley. Thank you.*

*Katharine Connable*
*Independence, CA*

Ed: The reference to reckoning time by the position of the constellation Hen and Chickens should have been attributed to the late Mr. Giraud. He also commented on the young foreign herders of today, conceding they are well-trained, but "one thing they haven't learned. They can't bake bread like I could!" Giraud was remembering the sage brush fire he used to build to bake bread in a covered pot in the coals.

**Margaret Harlin's Sisters Remember. . .**

*My niece Betty Tatum of Bishop mailed me a copy of your November/December issue which I am thoroughly enjoying.*

*Especially the Goldfield article by Valerie Naso, having been born in Goldfield and raised in the Owens Valley, and the fact that my sister Margaret Harlin was quoted made it doubly interesting.*

*The story of Dr. Nellie is beautiful, her husband was our doctor when we came to the valley.*

*I haven't had time to read all the articles yet but both my husband and I will enjoy them all.*

*Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd Patterson*
*Lewiston, Idaho*

*I received a copy of* **Sierra Life** *as a gift a few days ago and fell in love with it. . . I lived in Bishop a good many years, left in 1939 after we sold our business to LA (Los Angeles Dept. of Water and Power).*

*I was born in Goldfield and enjoyed the article in the November/December issue. Margaret Harlin was my sister, she passed away in March. I remember everything she told, especially my mother's fur coat and ostrich plumes, they came from the big ostrich farm in Pasadena.*

*Looking forward to my next copies and would like to come in and talk to you next summer when I come to Bishop.*

*Elsie N. Noldeke*
*Sebastopol, CA*

*I was born in Goldfield, Nevada, and the article quoting my sister Margaret Harlin was close to my heart.*

*Lived most of my life in Bishop until 1941, at the corner of Fowler and Elm. . .*

*Alice Crandall*
*Spokane, WA*

Ed: We were sorry to hear of Margaret Harlin's passing, she was truly a fine lady. We feel very fortunate to have had the opportunity to know her.

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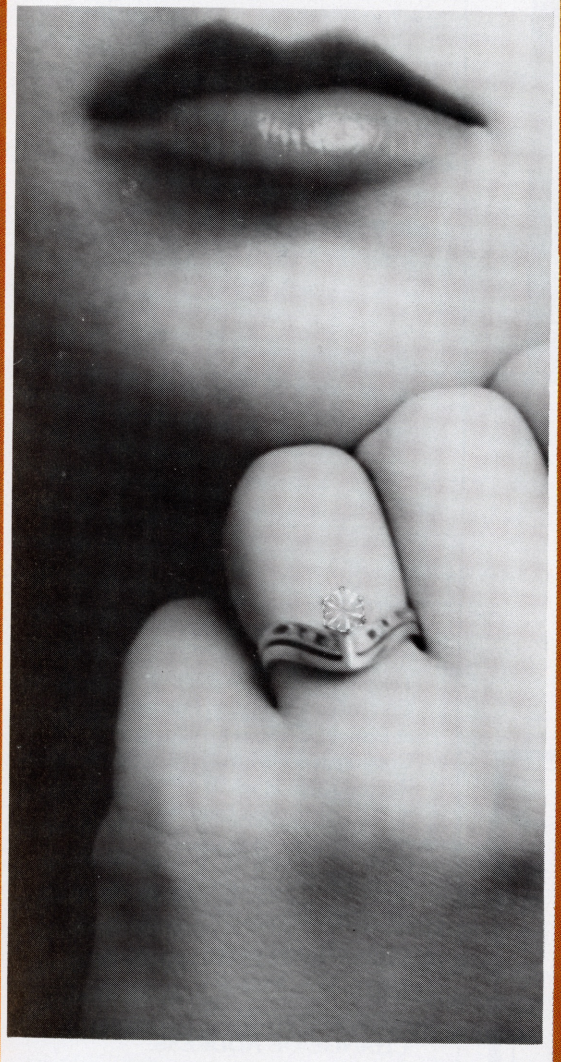

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**Special Features** J.E. Aim Morhardt
**Staff Geologist** Peter Joralemon

**PHOTOGRAPHY—ART**

**Chief Photographer** Patty Van Dolson
Jim Stroup
John Stow
**Art Director** Janice Kabala
Russ Boston

**ADVERTISING**

**Advertising Director** Mark Michaels
William Staggs

**699 West Line Street, Bishop, CA 93514**
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# Sierra Life

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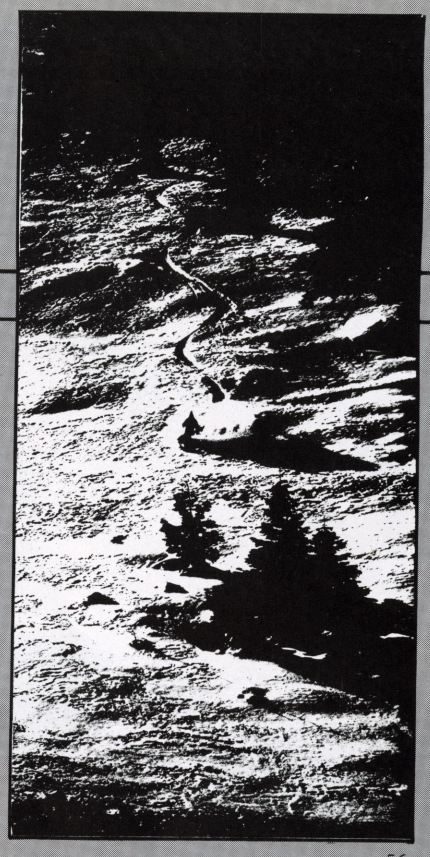

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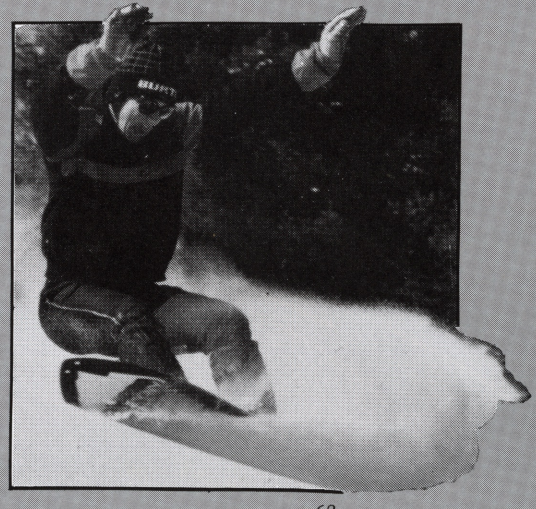

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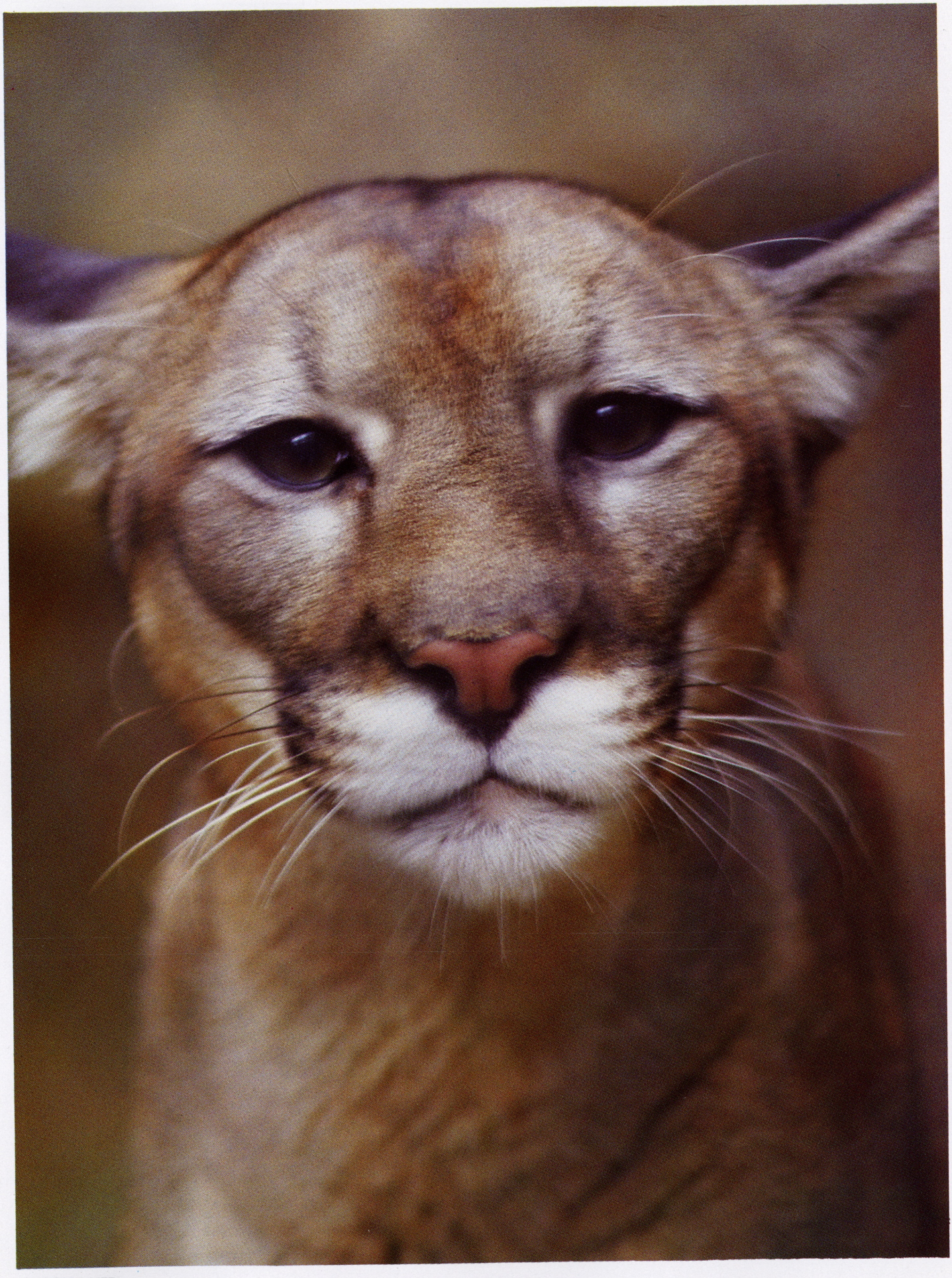

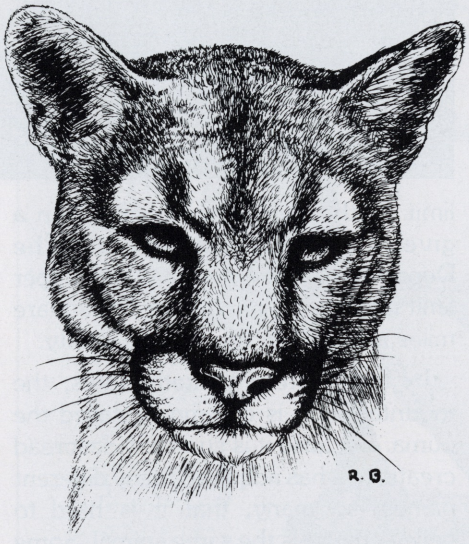


# MOUNTAIN LION

## FAR-RANGING DENIZEN OF THE SIERRA NEVADA

Text and photos by Mike McWherter

The mountain lion has the largest range of any native mammal in the western hemisphere. It has been seen as far north as British Columbia and as far south as Patagonia. At least 15 subspecies or races are recognized. Mountain lions were absent in South America until the Panama land bridge was re-established in the Pleistocene (about one million years ago), a time when the sabre-toothed tiger also entered South America, only to eventually become extinct. In California they not only live in the forested regions of the Sierra Nevada but inhabit such diverse regions as the wet north coast ranges and dry low deserts near the Mexican border.

The mountain lion has been seen as high as 11,000 feet on Mt. Whitney. Within the Sierra Nevada, the mountain lion's greatest stronghold is the southern part of the range. It is by no means numerous, but on the range's western side, where greater numbers exist, there may be three or more lions per one hundred square miles. They are usually found in association with deer, their preferred diet.

*continued on next page . . .*

**Mountain Lion** *continued*

Gradual reduction of mountain lion habitat, not only in the Sierra Nevada, but throughout California, is recognized by the California Department of Fish and Game as a problem. Under conditions of continued and expanding loss of critical lion habitat, reduction in populations would be expected. However, much of the wildland lions prefer is either owned by the public or not likely to be developed.

In the eastern United States the range of the mountain lion has been considerably reduced in the last century. Much of the previous forest cover, once harboring great numbers of deer, has been converted into farmlands. Also, the bounty system in the east has been particularly harsh on them. They have all but disappeared east of the Alleghenies, but may still be found in the Appalachian ranges. Mountain lions have fared better in the mountainous regions of the west where the Rocky, Cascade, and Sierra Nevada mountain ranges provide refuge.

An elusive creature, the mountain lion is seldom seen by humans except when treed by dogs. It is no wonder that its numbers are so difficult to determine. Techniques used to determine its numbers rely on estimates based upon the frequency of observation of its tracks. In 1982, the California Department of Fish and Game estimated the state population to be between 2,400 and 3,000 animals. Previously, in 1977, the Department had conservatively estimated the population to be 2400 animals.

In an independent study, also in 1977, Defenders of Wildlife and the National Audubon Society contracted Dr. Carl Koford of the University of California at Berkeley to make an estimate. His estimate was 1,000 animals with about 15,000 square miles of lion habitat. The Department estimated the current existing habitat of the mountain lion in California to be about 70,000 square miles. With the Department's current estimate of 2,400 to 3,000 animals and existing habitat figures, it was calculated that the state population of mountain lions could not exceed 1000 additional animals. There is an upper limit to the number of lions which a given area can support. The Department estimates that this upper limit may be 10 animals per 100 square miles as found in Monterey County.

In the western United States, the mountain lion is commonly called the puma. Because it is such a widespread creature, it has acquired many different names; so many, that it is hard to believe that it is the same animal. Some of its other names: cougar, panther, painter (corruption of "panther"), deer tiger, Mexican lion, and catamount (from "cat of the mountain"). The word "panther," commonly used in the eastern United States by early settlers, is somewhat of a misnomer since "panther" is really another name for the leopard, a large cat more closely related to the lions of Africa. "Mountain lion" is a common usage in the western United States. "Cougar" is a Brazilian name and "puma" is likely of Peruvian origin.

Mountain lions are of the order Carnivora, which includes all cats (domestic and wild), dogs, bears, and wolves. Members of Carnivora are so named because of their penchant for meat-eating. All cats of the world belong to the cat family Felidae. Cats of the genus *Felis* include mountain lions, ocelots, and domestic cats. These cats purr but are unable to roar. Within the genus *Panthera* are the largest cats: lions, tigers, leopards, and jaguars. These cats roar but are unable to purr. The two other genera of the cat family are *Lynx* and *Acinonyx* (cheetahs). The mountain lion is of the species *concolor* and thus its scientific name is *Felis concolor*.

Except for the larger jaguar, *Panthera onca*, the mountain lion is the biggest cat of North America. A large full-grown mountain lion may have a body length over five feet, a tail over three feet, and weigh as much as 200 pounds. This is about half the size of the African lion. However, in California, weights average much lower. Fifteen adult males from Monterey County averaged about 106 pounds, and the average weight of eight females was about 73 pounds. The sheer weight of a mountain lion, as it drops on its prey from a tree or rocky ledge, is enough to bring its victim to the ground. Its great strength makes man its only serious enemy.

Attacks on humans by mountain lions are extremely rare. It prefers to avoid all contact with humans. However, the female will bravely defend her young. If you are in the same area with a lion, it will likely know about your presence and will soon disappear under forest cover. Many of us have probably been seen by lions even though we have never seen them. There are individuals who have lived all their lives in mountain lion country, and have seen only signs of the big cat.

The mountain lion is a large animal, able to move swiftly and quietly as it stalks its prey. It will kill deer that are weak, old or sick. Sometimes mountain sheep are included in its diet, as well as smaller animals like rabbits, marmots, foxes, and raccoons. But deer are the lion's main diet and it may kill from 50 to 75 a year. When deer are not plentiful, mountain lions will even take skunks

*continued on next page . . .*

**Mountain Lion** *continued*

and porcupines. To the dismay of ranchers, farmers and cattlemen, lions will also take domestic sheep, hogs, and young horses.

Although mating may take place any time of the year, the young are generally born in the spring. Females begin to breed between two and three years of age. Factors such as weather and available food are strong influences on mating behavior. The male is mostly a solitary individual. If present when the kittens are born, he will be driven away by the female, as he may kill the young. Males will fight other males for territory or for a female in estrus.

Three months after mating, between two and five young are born. They are born with their eyes closed, ears undeveloped, and sense of smell absent. At this point the mother's purring has an interesting homing function. Her purring is felt as a vibration by the kittens, who approach and immediately begin to nurse. When the kittens begin nursing, the mother stops purring. By two months, the kittens will be following her on hunts where they learn skills which will enable them to one day go off on their own. In the meantime, they will take advantage of their stay with mother and spend long hours playing, jumping, and tumbling about with one another. In the wild, mountain lions seldom live to be over eight years old. However, in captivity, they may live to be over fifteen years.

The mountain lion has historically preyed upon livestock in California. For this reason, the California Legislature classified it as a bountied predator in 1907. It has since been reclassified a number of times. In 1963, the bounty was rescinded and the lion was classified a non-protected mammal. In 1969, it was reclassified as a big game mammal.

The first regulated hunting season occurred during the 1970-71 license year (July 1 through June 30). License tag sales totaled 4,726 and 83 lions were taken. A one-lion limit was in effect from November 15, 1971 through February 29, 1972. Tag sales totaled 227, and 35 lions were taken. Game animal status

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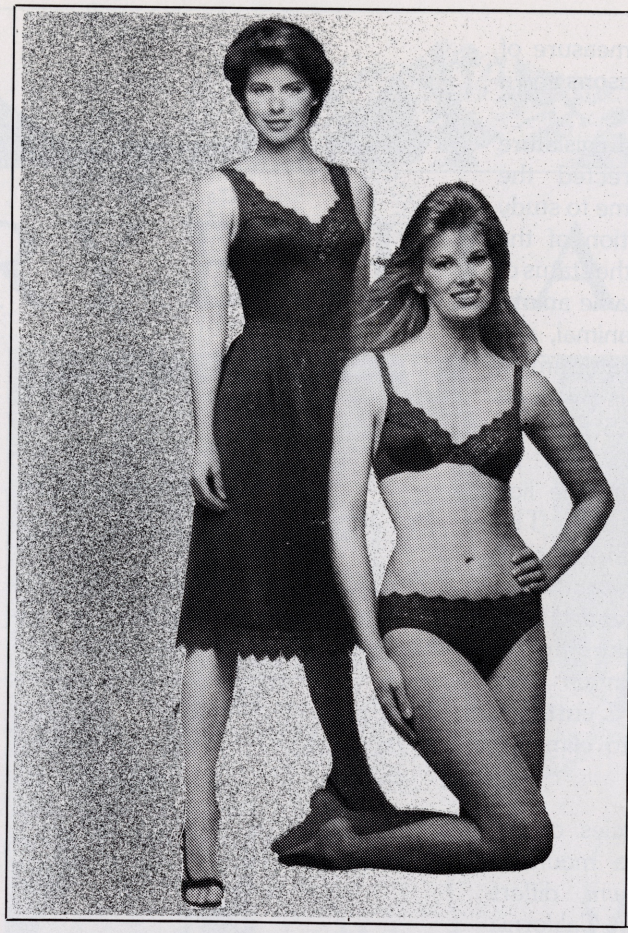

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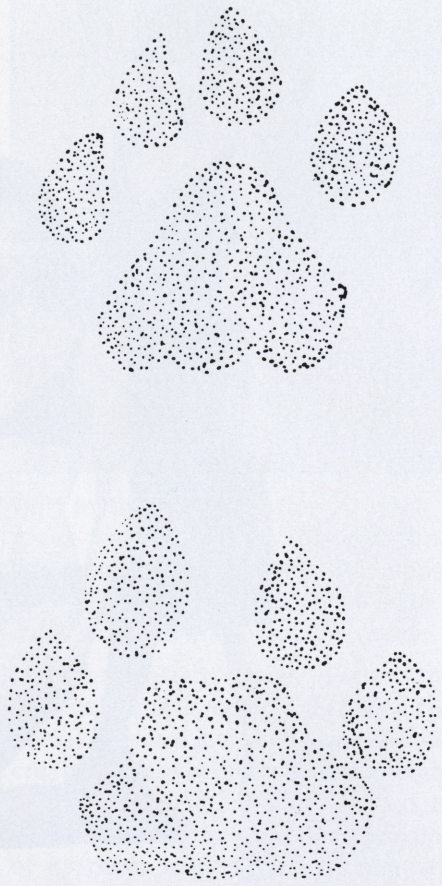
**Mountain Lion** *continued*

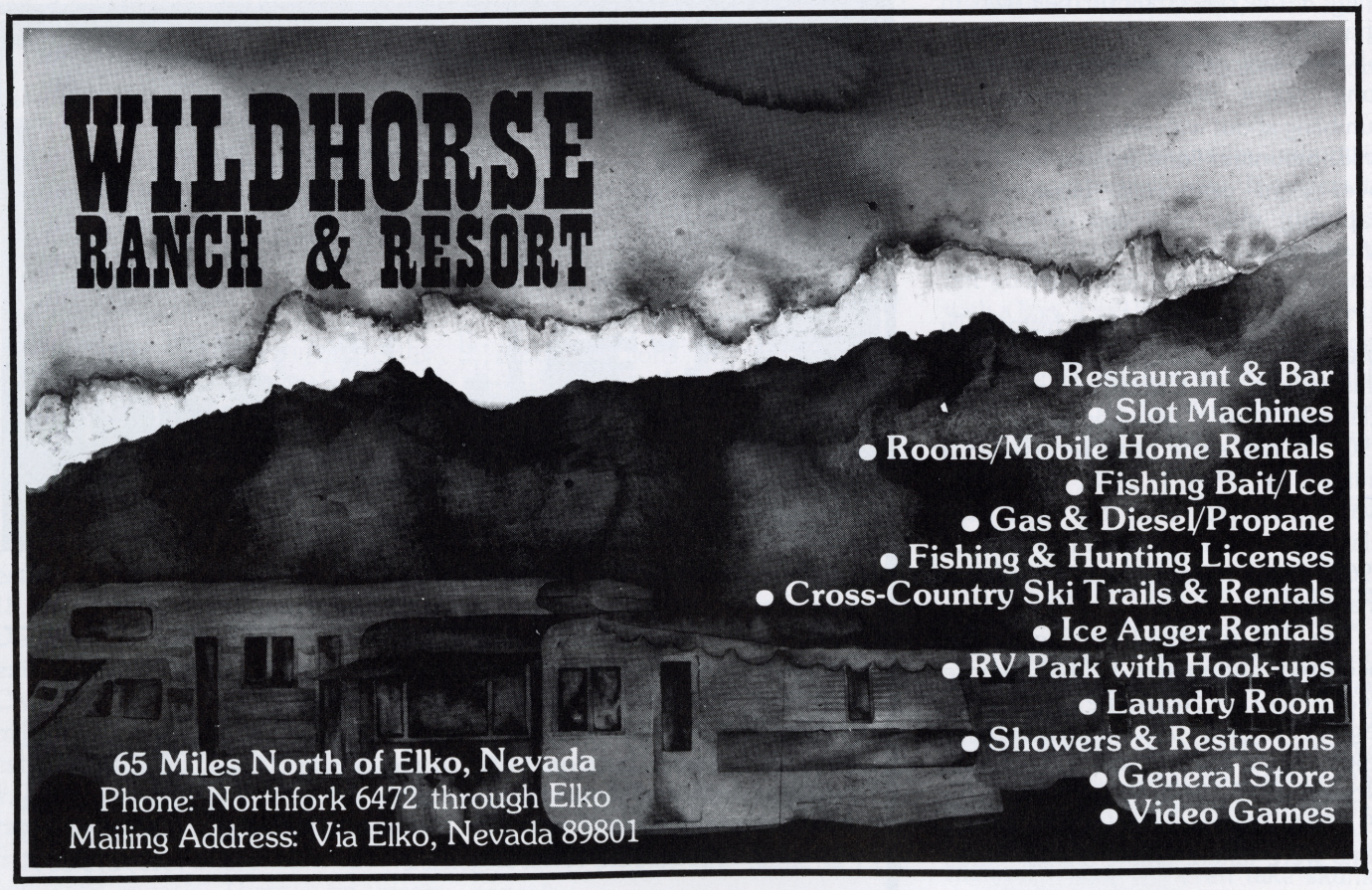
gave the mountain lion a measure of protection in that limited seasons and a bag limit were imposed.

In 1971 the California Legislature passed a bill which directed the Department of Fish and Game to study the mountain lion population of the state. The bill also changed the status of the mountain lion from a game animal to a protected non-game animal, and established a four-year moratorium on its sport hunting. Under this law, lions could only be killed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and only after an investigation confirmed that the lion had been killing livestock. The Legislature extended the moratorium until January 1, 1983. Recently the moratorium has been extended until 1986, with some weakening of protection for the mountain lion. Farmers and ranchers are currently allowed greater freedom to eliminate troublesome lions.



An endangered subspecies of the mountain lion: The Yuma mountain lion, *Felis concolor browni,* differs slightly from other lions in California and is considered a separate subspecies or race. It occurs in the Colorado Desert area of Riverside and Imperial counties and possibly in some of the mountain ranges in eastern San Bernardino County. The riparian flood plain forest of the lower Colorado River has greatly diminished in this century as a result of man's activities. Dr. Williams of California State College at Stanislaus was contracted by the California Department of Fish and Game to study this subspecies. In his study, he recommended that all mountain lions in the California desert areas continue to be fully protected and suggested State and Federal endangered status for this subspecies.

Most of us may wander a lifetime in the Sierra Nevada and never see the elusive mountain lion. It is a secretive creature that depends upon its stealth, speed, and cunning to survive in a world which is often hostile to its existence. The future of the mountain lion in the Sierra Nevada, as well as everywhere else it exists, will depend not only upon our understanding and appreciation of this majestic predator, but also on wildlife and land-use policies which advocate its preservation.□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# COUNTRY BALLADEER

## MARTY FORSTENZER

Text and photo by Mark Michaels

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania is a blue-collar coal-mining, steel-mill town; it can be a tough place to grow up. "When I was a kid there," says Marty Forstenzer, "the best things about Pittsburgh were the Steelers and the Pirates." The 32-year-old singer/songwriter, who now makes his home in Bishop, California, knew that he did not want to grow up to work in the steel mills. "I knew that I wanted to do something creative, but I didn't really know what; there was not much creativity back there that I was aware of. I needed some sort of direction."

Then, when he was thirteen, something happened that caused Marty Forstenzer's life to change. That something was the Beatles. "When I first heard the Beatles on the radio, I was just amazed, just blown away. Up until then, except for Motown, the stuff you heard on the radio was awful, just garbage for the most part. But the Beatles rolled right over all of that." More than giving him good music to listen to, the Beatles gave Marty a direction. He decided to be like his new heroes and role models. He became a musician.

After spending two years at Penn State University, Marty relocated to Northern California, where he attended the University of California at Berkeley. "All I'd been hearing about for years was how great things were in California, how there were all these fantastic musicians out there, putting together bands."

He worked on getting his degree in Political Science at Berkeley, writing songs and performing around the Bay Area, and meeting other musicians. In 1970, Marty, along with several other local musicians, formed Rocket 88, a band that crossed over the boundaries into several musical categories.

"We played rock and roll, and we played country," recalls Marty. "At that time, country music was undergoing a big change — it was evolving, at least in California, into a sort of urban country format that appealed to a diverse audience. This was spearheaded by bands like The Flying Burrito Brothers, Commander Cody and His Lost Planet Airmen, and the New Riders of the Purple Sage."

Taking their cue from these and other groups, Rocket 88 began playing a new brand of country music that spoke to people in urban California as well as rural Oklahoma. In 1970, the band received a commission to write and perform a musical score for a film, which was produced and aired by the local PBS television station in San Francisco, KQED.

Meanwhile, Marty discontinued his studies and moved to Marin County, north of San Francisco. "I felt that I had to get away from all the tensions at Berkeley, all the political confrontation which was going on there at that time. I needed some time to gather my thoughts, and to write music."

While Marty was living in Marin, writing songs and playing music with Rocket 88, his brother Ed, an attorney, was hired to do legal work for the Tribal Council in Bishop. Marty came to Bishop to visit his brother, and was

*continued on page 70*

# BODIE

## CALIFORNIA'S FAVORITE GHOST TOWN

by George Williams, III

*Photos by Jim Stroup*

Bodie is one of America's last ghost towns still alive. It hasn't burned to the ground. It hasn't been hauled away by enthusiasts. And it hasn't been dolled up with painted signs, casinos, or gas stations.

Bodie stands in all its worn glory, looking pretty much the way it did when the gold mines shut down. The old ghost town is an aging reminder of a great American era that will never come again.

In the past few years, Bodie has become increasingly popular as a sightseer's delight. Much of this is due to the new paved road; turn off is seven miles south of Bridgeport on Highway 395. The road into Bodie is 13 miles. Ten miles are paved. The last three are bumpy, but trailers and RVs get in just fine. There are no gas stations or stores in Bodie, so bring everything you'll need. And in winter months, check highway conditions before embarking, the road may be closed.

Bodie has a cult following of people who discovered the ghost town on their own. These people come back from time to time — sometimes every year. For Bodie is a place that stirs the emotions and stimulates fantasies of the Old West. Each person gets to feel as if Bodie belongs to them alone. In a way it does. As a California State Park and a National Historic Site, they *do* own part of it.

Many first-time visitors to the eastern Sierra are not aware that Bodie was the culminating bonanza in a series of gold strikes which took place after the 1849 gold rush. During the latter 1850s, when many of the western slope placers were worked out, men crossed

*continued on next page . . .*

*(Above) Post office and Odd Fellows Lodge*

*(Opposite page, top) J.S. Cain's house*

*(Opposite page, bottom) Interior of Boone store and warehouse*

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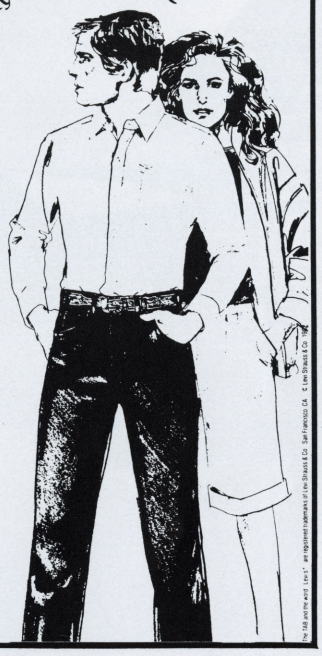

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**Bodie** *continued*

over to the eastern Sierra in search of new strikes. The Dogtown placer discovery in 1857, seven miles south of Bridgeport, caused the first rush to this area. Two years later gold was found in Rattlesnake Gulch north of Mono Lake, and one mile east of Conway Summit. The site was named Monoville, and by the spring of 1860 the area was flooded with prospectors. Monoville became the first major settlement east of the Sierra and south of Lake Tahoe. The camp had 40 houses, several hotels and numerous saloons. Some buildings still remain.

It was to Monoville that Bill Bodey, Bodie's namesake (spelling of the town was altered because of a printer's error) wandered in early 1859. In the fall of that year, Bodey and three others, Pat Garraty, Terrence Brodigan and Bill Boyle, made a prospecting trip from Monoville into the nearby hills, now called the Bodie Hills. At a place later named Taylor Gulch, east of Bodie and over Silver Hill, the four men found gold in a quartz outcropping. The men were excited but unprepared for the approaching Sierra winter. They decided to leave the site and promised each other to keep their discovery secret until spring when they would return.

But Bill Bodey broke his promise. He soon returned to the area with 'Black' Taylor, a short dark man, half Cherokee. Bodey and Taylor built a crude cabin and began working their claims.

It was on a return supply trip from Monoville that a surprise blizzard caught Bodey and Taylor in Cottonwood Canyon, north of Mono Lake. Both men struggled through the cold and snow, but Bodey weakened and Taylor had to carry him until he was exhausted. They decided that Taylor should return to the cabin — now only a mile and a half away — refresh himself and return for Bodey. Taylor left Bodey wrapped in a blanket.

When Taylor returned to the area where he had left Bodey, the blizzard had worsened and he was unable to find him. In the spring, Taylor found Bodey's remains, stripped by hungry coyotes.

Taylor buried Bodey in a grave three and a half feet deep in the blanket in which he had left him. In 1879, Bodey was exhumed and buried in the Bodie Cemetery. 'Black' Taylor was later savagely murdered by Indians near Benton.

A handful of miners continued working the Bodie diggings through the 1860s and 70s. But the rich strikes at Virginia City in 1859 and nearby Aurora and Benton in 1860 drew interest away from Bodie.

In 1876 a freak cave-in at the Bunker Hill mine — later called the Standard — revealed a rich gold deposit. Investors poured money in. Then in 1878 there was an even richer strike in the Bodie mine. Within six weeks the Bodie mine shipped one million dollars in gold bullion!

Bodie boomed. By the end of 1878 the tiny camp had mushroomed into a town of 600 to 800 buildings. Stages were unable to carry enough gold-crazed men and women into Bodie, the new boom town.

At the peak of Bodie's boom in 1880, nearly 10,000 people and hundreds of buildings filled the narrow mountain valley. With the gold excitement came the worst characters, Bodie bad men they were called. Bodie soon earned the reputation as the most wicked and violent mining camp in the West. Murders, shootings and knifings were rampant in the saloons. Dance halls and saloons roared day and night, gambling was non-stop, the pounding of the stamp mills were relentless, and the row of red lights behind Main Street burned until dawn.

It was in the north end of Bodie, in the Main Street saloons, in Chinatown dance halls on King Street, and in the houses of prostitution on Bonanza Street where most of the violence took place. Drifting bad men, out of work, filled with whiskey and wine, exploded on little provocation. Fights over dance hall girls and prostitutes were common. Often prostitutes were victims of bloody beatings. Kate Wise was beaten by Jack Perry. Sailor Jack, a notorious prostitute, was beaten with a lunch bucket by Pat Shea. Mrs. Draper was beaten to death by her husband with a black snake whip. Being a prostitute in a wild mining town like Bodie was not as glamorous as the Hollywood movies portray.

*continued on next page . . .*

**Bodie** *continued*

The lives of the Bodie prostitutes were sad. Many turned to alcohol or smoked opium in the Chinatown joss houses to ease the loneliness of their lives. In the end, many chose suicide as the ultimate escape.

Eleanor Dumont — Madame Moustache — was one. She was a gambler. In her youth, her beauty and quiet confidence stunned miners. She first appeared in Nevada City in 1855. For the next 24 years she followed the latest mining excitement and when her luck went bad she turned to prostitution to recoup her gambling losses. She arrived in Bodie in September, 1879. But luck did not come with her. After losing a borrowed stake of $300, Dumont quietly walked out of town. Two miles south of Bodie she swallowed poison. Her body was discovered later and buried in the Bodie outcast cemetery, outside the cemetery fence.

French Joe is another sad story. She was arrested in 1879 for kicking the windows out of a dance hall. Like Dumont, French Joe left Bodie on foot. Her body was later discovered four miles from town near Rough Creek.

Rosa May was one of Bodie's most beautiful and successful prostitutes. She arrived in Bodie in 1892 after many years in Virginia City and Carson City. She was in love with Ernest Marks, a Bodie saloon keeper, who had also come down from Gold Hill near Virginia City. Rosa May and Marks' tempestuous relationship had been on and off again for twenty years.

Rosa May purchased a small white house on Bonanza Street where she ran a noted prostitution and gambling business. Stories of Rosa May's kindness abound. She often gave money and food to her destitute neighbors. She gave dimes to children whenever she came uptown.

In the severe winter of 1911-12, Rosa May died while nursing miners during a pneumonia epidemic. Despite her acts of kindness and her efforts to save the lives of the Bodie miners, she was denied burial in the Bodie Cemetery. Her friends were forced to bury her in the outcast cemetery. Ernest Marks, her lover of 34 years, had a picket fence placed around her grave which was

*continued on page 19*


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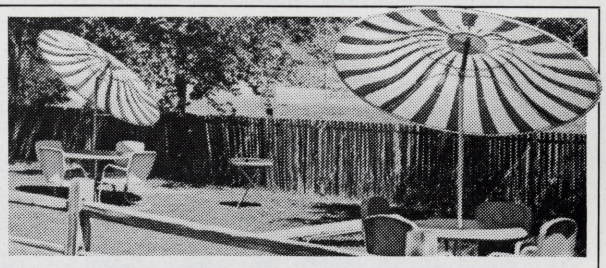

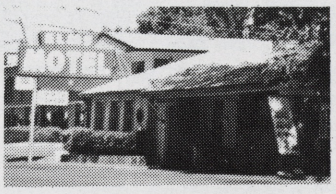


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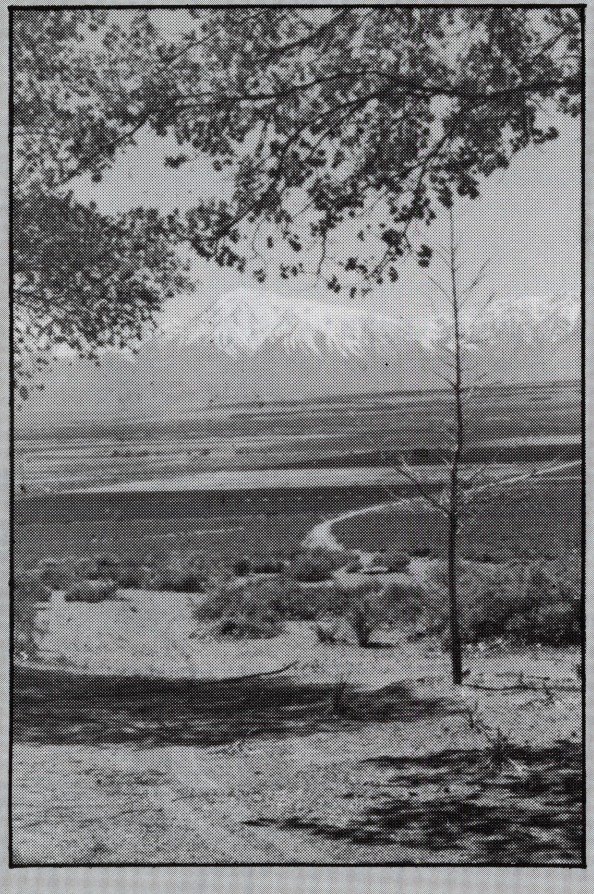

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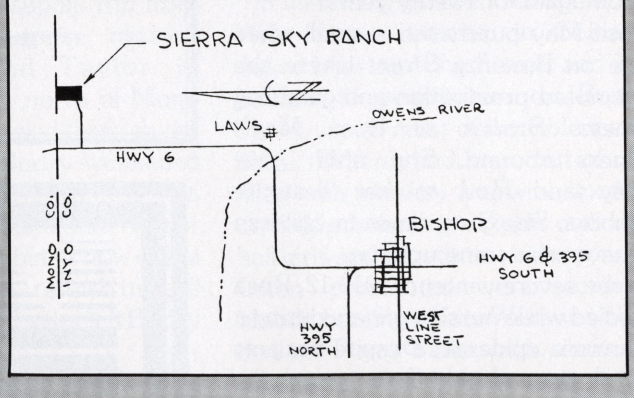


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**Bodie** *continued*

later destroyed by vandals. The author located Rosa May's lost grave site and replaced the picket fence.

Bodie's days in the sun were too few, from 1879-82. Manipulation of Bodie mining stocks by San Francisco stockbrokers eventually caused investors to gamble their money elsewhere. With less cash, Bodie's days were numbered. Still, the Standard mine and mill continued to operate. The introduction of the cyanide gold extraction process in the 1890s helped keep Bodie alive until World War I. Finally, the Standard mine and mill shut down.

Without means of earning a living, miners were forced to move on, most with regrets. Bodie may have been isolated, entertainments few and winters hard, but the community was close and friendly. Many families had lived there since the boom. They had learned to help and depend on each other. When the bottom fell out, they were forced to leave the people and the home town they loved. Many left Bodie with tears. A handful of old timers held out through the 1940s, but they too died or moved away.

In 1932, a young boy playing with matches behind the Sawdust Corner Saloon started a fire which quickly spread to adjacent buildings. Hoses were hooked up to hydrants but no water spurted out. The water lines were clogged with mud and the hoses were useless. In a matter of hours, the fire destroyed a large portion of the town, several hotels, the bank, and most of the saloons where Bodie's legends were made.

Still, much of the camp still stands — the Standard mill, saloons, the general store, the fire house, jail, church, school house, the miners' cottages, the cemetery and the Bodie Museum — plenty to give visitors a good idea what the Old West was really like. □

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*George Williams, III is the author of ROSA MAY: THE SEARCH FOR A MINING CAMP LEGEND, THE GUIDE TO BODIE, and MURDERS OF CONVICT LAKE, available throughout the Sierra. Tree By the River Publishing, Box 413, Riverside, CA 92502.*

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*Angelo Rossi, surrounded by his children, in a photo taken in 1879. Clockwise from left: Joe, Berna, Louis, Rafael and Tony.*

# The ROSSI Family

*By Mark Michaels*

The story of the Rossi family is the story of America in microcosm. It is a story of migration, of hardship; most importantly, though, it is a story of survival and of triumph over adversity. It is a story that captures the spirit of the men and women who settled in this once wild and desolate region of the American West, determined to make their lives here, against what must at times have seemed to them tremendously long odds. It is a story with many heroes, and a few villains; a story of many successes as well as a few failures. It is a story of which current members of the Rossi family and future Rossis can be proud, of which all the rest of us can be proud as well, for here is not only the triumph of one family, but also the triumph of Man.

In the latter half of the 19th century in Italy, there were many troubles, many warring factions, much unrest. It is unclear as to what part Angelo Rossi had played in the chaos rampant in the country. He had twice been kidnapped and released upon payment of ransom, perhaps only because he had moderate wealth. In 1879, Angelo, his wife Rosa, and several of their children, left their home in the small town of Villa Latina, near Cassino in southern Italy, on a sojourn that would eventually bring them to America. The family traveled through much of Europe, supporting itself by working in orchards and vineyards, and by playing music. In 1883, Angelo, accompanied by five of his children, left Europe on a ship bound for America; his wife Rosa, pregnant at the time, returned to their home in Villa Latina with their other two children, to wait until Angelo could make enough money to pay their way over.

*continued on next page . . .*

*Harry and Berna Rossi Fletcher, with family and friends at the Laws Hotel. Photo taken circa 1910.*

**Rossi** *continued*

Later that year, after an arduous passage across the Atlantic on a steamer, Angelo Rossi and his daughter Benedetta (Berna), his sons Raffaele (Rafael), Guiseppi (Joe), Luigi (Louis) and Antonio (Tony) arrived in Canada. With them was Mary Sutrario, an orphan who had joined the family while it was in France. Angelo and his children worked their way west across the continent, earning a living as street musicians. Eventually, the family found itself in the town of Healdsburg, California, north of San Francisco, where they remained until 1886, farming and raising goats. Berna, who had remained behind in Canada, joined the family in California and married an English seaman named Harry Fletcher in San Francisco. The oldest of Angelo and Rosa's children, Angela Maria (Mary), was able to join the family in 1885.

The earliest record of the Rossi family in Inyo County is that of October 15, 1886, when Angelo Rossi recorded the purchase of several lots on Washington Street in the town of Lone Pine. According to family records, Angelo farmed while his sons Rafael and Tony herded goats and sheep from Lone Pine to the Mono Lake area. Rafael moved up to Big Pine sometime before 1890, having married Mary Sutrario, the orphaned girl from France, in 1885. He and his wife settled first in Independence, between Lone Pine and Big Pine, while he raised sheep and goats with his brother.

Angelo Rossi homesteaded 160 acres of land north of Lone Pine in the summer of 1891; that same year, Angelo's sons Joe and Louis moved from Healdsburg to Inyo County, followed by Angela Maria two years later. Finally, in 1894, Angelo was able to bring over his wife Rosa, and their remaining children, Ben and Nita. After a separation of more than ten years, the Rossi family was again united, starting a new life in the New World.

At first, all of the members of the Rossi family worked together; farm and ranch work required numbers of people, and there was no money to hire anyone other than family members, who shared in the profits, if there were any profits. Sheep were routinely lost to wolves and coyotes, severe weather damaged the crops; still, the family managed to make some headway. Rafael, who was married and had three small children, was able to buy a piece of property about five miles from Big Pine where, along with his young family, he began an orchard, raising grapes and other fruit. Rafael was also one of the first beekeepers in Inyo County, and was later chosen to be the County bee inspector. Rafael's niece, Margherita Milovich, now 82 and the matriarch of the Rossi family, recalls her uncle: "He was always proper, a real old-world gentleman. I remember when I was a little girl, seeing him play his accordion for all of us children. Rafael was one of the hardest-working men I ever knew, and one of the most patriotic. He always said that he owed more to this country than he could ever repay." Rafael was involved in Big Pine civic events almost from his first day in the

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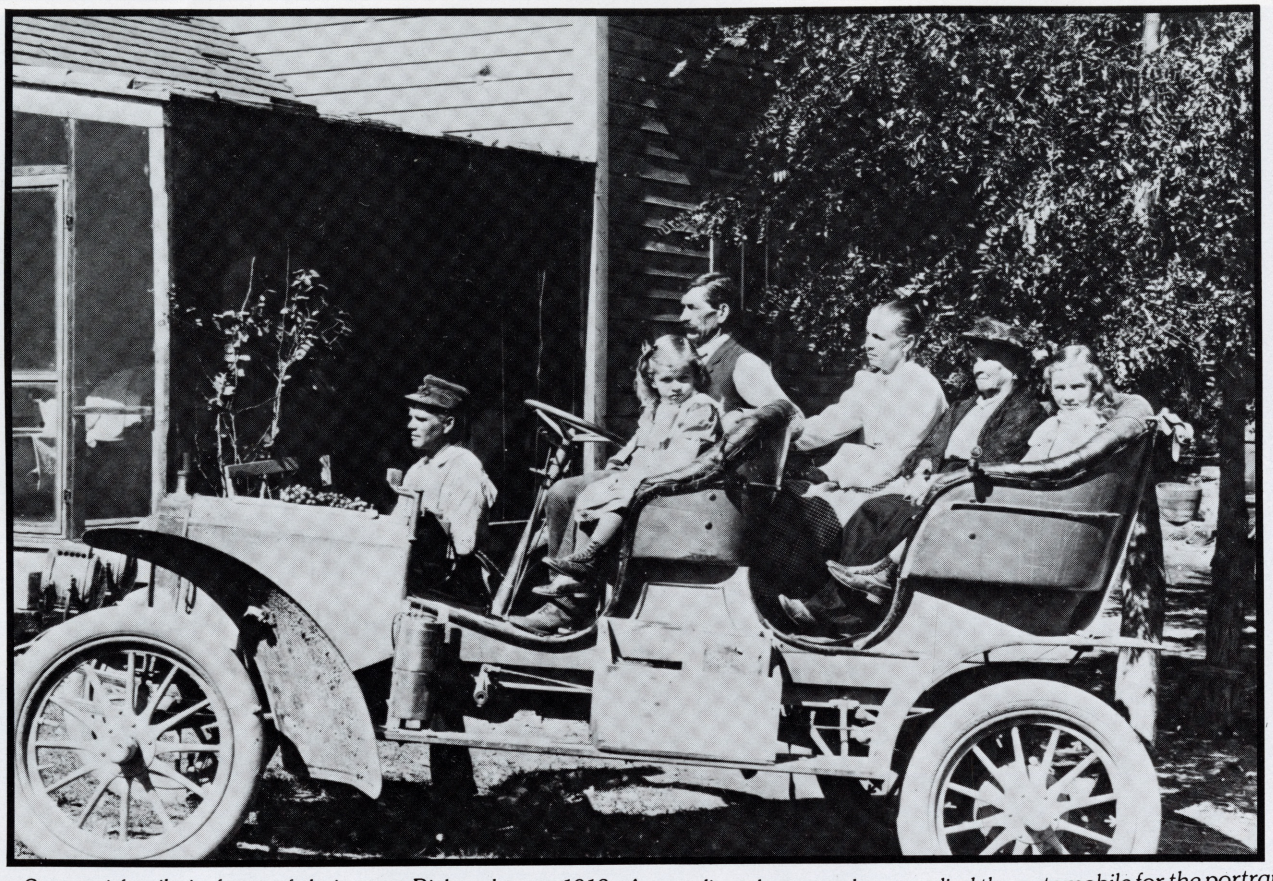

*The Serventi family in front of their west Bishop home, 1912. A traveling photographer supplied the automobile for the portrait.*

**Rossi** *continued*

community, helping to plant trees and belonging to various town improvement committees.

Rafael and Mary Rossi's three sons, Felix, Frank and Mandy, all grew up on the big ranch near Big Pine. In addition to the orchards and bees and sheep, the family, in the early years of the twentieth century, built a rooming house used by the many miners and ranch hands who worked in and around Big Pine.

While Rafael was developing his ranch and raising his family, his brother Tony was working with their father, and learning to be a stonemason. Working for Rafael in Big Pine, he met Nancy Blake, daughter of a pioneer Owens Valley family. Tony and Nancy bought a piece of property on the west side of Big Pine in 1899; his descendents still live on the land there. One of their six children, Virginia (Babe) Rossi Harwood, in an unpublished manuscript entitled "Babe's Story," writes of life in early twentieth century Big Pine:

"The land and pure clean water was good to us. . .babies thrived without the aid of vitamins, shots or baby foods. We had milk cows for butter, milk, and cottage cheese, and always a big dog. Each morning, the dog drove the cows to pasture, and in the evening, was sent to bring them in. . . Welfare was unheard of and each family took care of their own, including the aged. Clothing was never discarded — some was used for making bedding or braided rugs, or passed on for someone else to wear. Our shoes were watched carefully. The first thing was to outfit them with copper toes, and after that, they were soled and resoled until the uppers collapsed. I had two new dresses a year, one for the first day of school, and one for Christmas. . .

"The 4th of July was always a big day to celebrate. Big Pine had a parade, band concert, foot races, an Indian War Dance, and so on. Mother sold cakes and home-made ice cream. Another annual event was the traveling show which was a gala event. Drummers are another nice memory of childhood. They walked through the sand carrying large suitcases, going from house to house. Traveling photographers came through town as well. . .

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*A Rossi family fishing trip, Big Pine Creek, in the early 1920s.*

*Rosa Rossi and the eldest daughter, Mary. In front of the Rossi west Bishop house, about 1906. From left to right: 'Grandma' Rosa Rossi; Mary Rossi Serventi; Margherita, Louise and Joe Serventi; August Serventi; Anton Serventi; Margaret Bell.*

**Rossi Family** *continued*

"Dad played the accordion very well, so he furnished music for the dances, while Mother served sandwiches and cake for refreshment. When the mosquitoes were heavy in the summer, a worn-out washtub was filled with dried cow chips and set afire. It filled the yard with smoke and kept the mosquitoes away, and the aroma wasn't unpleasant at all."

In closing her reminiscences about her youth in the Owens Valley, Mrs. Harwood states, "I have had a beautiful life; our valley was green then, a natural flyway for migratory birds. In the spring and fall, strings of ducks and geese honked at us, from high above. We were very rich, although not monetarily."

In November of 1911, Tony Rossi took his wife and four children on an epic journey to the bright lights of Los Angeles, some 240 miles from Big Pine. Of this trip, Tony's daughter Estelle writes: "Late in the summer months, my dad began making plans for a means of transportation. He took an old wood wagon and turned it into a covered wagon, which was as beautiful to us then as the motor homes of today. We carried our water in barrels fastened to the side. When we stopped to camp overnight, Dad put up the tent and set up the little wood stove on which we cooked and heated our water. We carried enough supplies to last the entire trip. . .

"At last, we were on our way. The first day, we drove as far as Aberdeen and set up camp at what was called the Old Black Rock Ranch. The next day, we were up at dawn and off. Mama cooked a pot of beans and potatoes to

*continued on next page . . .*

**Rossi** *continued*

carry us for a day or two."

Of her mother, Estelle writes: "(She) must have been miserable throughout that whole trip, and I often wonder how she stood it and stayed so brave and cheerful all the way. I guess it was the pioneer blood in her."

She continues her narrative: "My brother and I walked the biggest part of the way across the desert. The horses traveled so slowly that it was easy to keep up. After two weeks on the road, we got to Mojave and set up camp on the outskirts of town. When we finished eating, we were tired and went to bed early. Sometime during the night, the wind came up and blew so hard that it blew our tent down. We scrambled around in the dark, gathered up what we could and crawled into the wagon until dawn." Finally, the bedraggled family arrived in Los Angeles: "We were driving up one street and down another; the shoes on the horses were making sparks on the pavement while the horses themselves were rearing and snorting and shying from the automobiles and trolley cars. We were all hanging on for our lives."

The Rossis stayed in Los Angeles for a month, renting a house with a barn in Long Beach. Of their time in Los Angeles, Estelle writes: "We were near enough to the ocean that we could walk to the beach. In the evenings we played games in the streets under the lights. It was all a new world to us — we didn't have electricity or street lights where we came from." Finally, the family had to return to their home in the Owens Valley. The trip home took over three exhausting weeks; when they returned to Big Pine, there was snow on the ground. It was time to dig in for another winter.

Not all of the Rossi story is happy. Berna Rossi Fletcher and her husband Harry moved to the then-thriving railroad town of Laws, a few miles northeast of Bishop, where in about 1910, they began to operate the Laws Hotel. There were problems with the marriage; in 1912, Berna left her husband and, with her children, returned to the area around Sebastopol, where the Rossis had spent some time before they moved to the Owens Valley. There, tragedy struck: members of the family ate poisonous mushrooms which had been gathered for dinner. All became ill; three of the children died.

*The marriage of Mike Milovich and Margherita Serventi. They are attended by a friend, George Dudley and Louise Serventi.*

Berna, over the course of her life, married three times and gave birth to a total of nine children. Although most of them left the Valley when they grew up, one stayed on. He was Carmen "Curley" Fletcher, a western songwriter and poet, as well as a prospector, rodeo rider and cowboy advisor to the movie studios in the 30s and 40s — a sort of outback Renaissance man.

"He was a character," says second cousin Ray Milovich, a young man when Curley's career was in full swing. "The story goes that when Curley was a kid growing up in Laws, he was always pulling pranks on people, such as the time he and a couple of his buddies greased the railroad tracks in front of the train station. When the train got to town, the engineer put on his brakes, but the train slid right out of town."

Curley achieved some degree of fame in the 30s when his song "The Strawberry Roan" was published and recorded by several artists. He subsequently published several volumes of cowboy poetry, and belonged for a time to The Arizona Wranglers, one of the first western bands to perform on radio. He penned numerous other songs, including "Canadian Rose" and "The Chuck-Wagon Blues." When not working on western movie sets in Los Angeles or promoting mining claims in Nevada, Curley could usually be found in McMurry's Bar in Bishop, entertaining the local citizenry with his stories and

*continued on next page . . .*

songs.

"Curley always was a smooth talker, and he usually could get up a good audience," remembers Milovich. "He always had some kind of scheme or other going." Curley had several serious injuries while rodeoing; eventually, he gave up that part of his career to concentrate on being an entertainer and poet. Married several times, he had three children. Curley Fletcher died of cancer in the early 1950s.

Angelo and Rosa's oldest daughter, Mary, joined the rest of the family in Big Pine shortly before 1900. While working as a chambermaid in the Butler Hotel, she met a miner, also an Italian immigrant, named Anton Serventi. He had come to Big Pine via Bodie, the fabled boom town near Bridgeport, and Tonopah, Nevada, where he worked in the silver mines.

It was said of Anton Serventi that he could tell a story better than practically anyone in Big Pine. When he would sit in the parlor of the Butler Hotel, all of the other residents and the hotel staff would gather around to hear his tales of life in Italy, and of life in the legendary places of the American West. One of the avid listeners was Mary Rossi. She fell in love with Serventi, and they were married in March of 1900. Their first child, a girl named Margherita, was born in March of 1902, shortly before they moved from Big Pine to a small farm on the west side of Bishop. There, in May 1904, their second daughter, Louise, was born. Anton and Mary and their children raised vegetables which they sold, along with butter, milk, eggs and cheese. Anton also helped out local ranchers with their haying, and cut firewood.

Margherita Serventi Milovich recalls those days: "Although it doesn't seem like much now, in those days being two miles out (from downtown Bishop) was like living way out in the country. We raised our own food — there weren't any stores nearby — and we had our own little community here, with our own school. Sometimes when it snowed in the winter, we couldn't get into Bishop for days."

Joe Rossi was the second-oldest of the children of Angelo and Rosa. He

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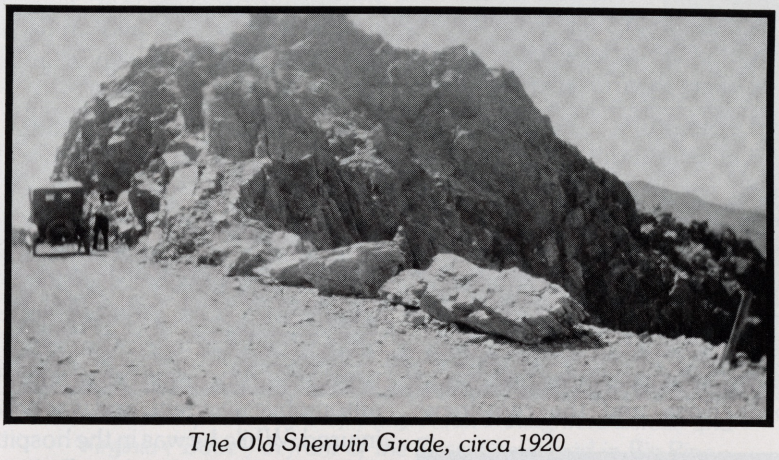
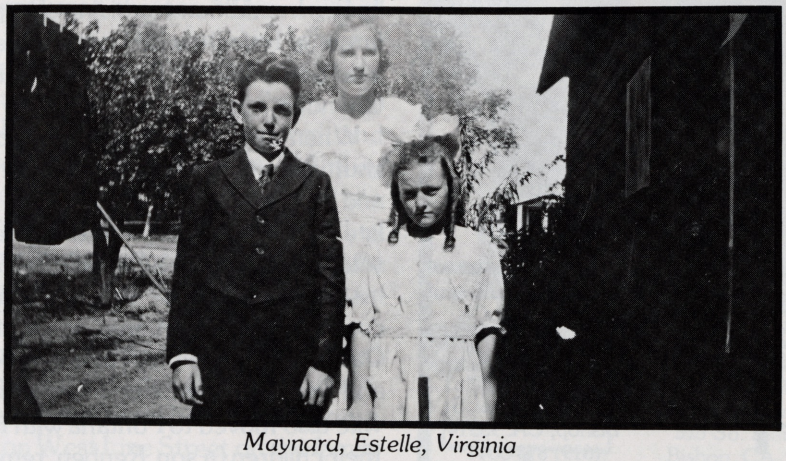
*Curley Fletcher on "Picadilly", Big Pine Rodeo*



*The Old Sherwin Grade, circa 1920*

*Alma Rossi with the family car, taken in the 1920s*



*Maynard, Estelle, Virginia*

moved from Big Pine after the turn of the century to Bishop, settling in an area southwest of town that was known as Sunland. He married Marguerite White in 1915, and homesteaded a ranch on what has come to be known as Rossi Hill. There he established what was possibly the first nursery in Bishop, along with an orchard and vineyard. He helped to establish the Sunland school, which served the growing number of children in the area, and started the tradition of Easter services on Rossi Hill. Joe and Marguerite raised six children on the ranch; they worked with the Serventis in various endeavors, such as packing the fruit that Joe grew in his orchard.

It seems natural at this point to pause and reflect: we have seen the Rossi family begin a long odyssey while still in Europe, separating the family for ten years while Angelo and his children struggled to establish a home in what must have seemed a strange new environment. Finally, they are able to bring over Rosa and the remaining children, and begin to solidify their holdings in the Owens Valley. Sons Tony and Rafael owned ranches and businesses in Big Pine, where each began a large family; daughter Mary wed and moved to Bishop, where son Joe was developing his homestead on Rossi Hill. Daughters Berna and Nita relocated their families out of the area, as did son Ben. Louis never married; he died in 1900. Little more is known about his life.

By the start of the twentieth century, the Rossi family had put down roots in the Eastern Sierra, both literally and figuratively: families and orchards had begun to grow, to produce, improving what had existed before.

As the new century grew from infancy to adolescence, Angelo and Rosa of course grew older as well. Although they moved from the ranch to a house in Bishop, Angelo continued to be active in agricultural matters, often traveling to Los Angeles to advise orchard owners there. On one of these trips, Angelo was involved in an automobile accident, and was seriously injured. While he was in the hospital, his wife was hospitalized in Bishop. On May 22, 1920, Angelo Rossi died of his injuries; Rosa died one day later. He was 79, she was 84. Their joint funeral was held at their daughter's home in Bishop. They had been married for over 60 years.

## The Second Generation

Rafael and Mary Rossi raised three sons, Felix, Frank, and Armando (Mandy). Rafael continued to be a participant in the social life of Big Pine, playing host to family gatherings at his home. In addition to raising sheep and farming, Rafael owned one of the first auto dealerships in the Owens Valley, a Chandler agency in Big Pine.

When the City of Los Angeles began shutting off the water to the farmers and ranchers of the Valley, Rafael, in his late fifties, saw what was to come and sold his ranch to the City. He and Mary later moved to the then-rural community of Fontana, in Southern California, where they raised grapefruit and had a vineyard. Son Mandy and his wife also moved to Fontana with two of their children (a son, Reuben, remained in the Big Pine area).

*Prize peaches grown on the Rossi farm.*

Rafael's wife, Mary, died in 1940, ending a marriage that had lasted 55 years. When World War II broke out, Rafael, at the age of 76, went to work at a war plant, using most of his salary to buy war bonds. His niece Margherita says, "If there had been any way for him to enlist in the Army, he would have done it!" Rafael Rossi lived to see several of his great-great-grandchildren; he died in Fontana at the age of 94. His granddaughter Karen and grandson Gary and their families live in the Owens Valley today. Their children are the sixth generation of Rossis who call the land between the high mountains home.

Tony and Nancy Rossi raised five children in Big Pine. Estelle and her sister Virginia (known as "Babe") both still live on the family homestead, along with their husbands. Harvey moved to Long Beach to work in the oil fields in the 1920s, and was killed in an automobile accident. Maynard married and moved to Lone Pine, where he owned, at various times, a nursery and feed store, and several bars and restaurants. Alma lived her life in Big Pine; for many years she owned the cafe and bar in town.

Virginia Rossi Harwood's daughter Harriette Allison also lives on the family homestead along with her daughter Melissa (the fourth generation to live there). Of her Aunt Alma, Harriette says, "Alma was perhaps the most independent person I've ever known. She lived her life the way she wanted to, and she didn't worry much about what other people made of it. She was one of the first women in Big Pine to have her own business. Between them, the bar and cafe were the social center of town. When somebody got drunk and rowdy in the bar, Aunt Alma was the one who threw them out, no matter how big they

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**Rossi Family** *continued*

were. She also made sure that people who were broke got fed, even if it was a whole family. That was especially true of the Indians.

"Big Pine was a different sort of town when I was a child. On the weekends, miners would come down from the hills to buy provisions and have some fun. This wasn't that long ago — in the 1950s — but there were still a lot of the old-timers left. You never knew their real names or where they were from. They were pretty rough-looking guys, but they always treated me with respect.

"The miners would have a big Saturday night, whooping it up and having a good time. Then, Sunday morning, I'd see them, lying around town, hungover and hurting. By Monday morning, they'd all be gone."

Nancy Rossi lived the remainder of her life on the family property in Big Pine, dying in 1945. Tony lived for a time in Lee Vining, returning to Big Pine in 1950. He died there in 1958, at the age of 83. Surviving Tony were four of his children, nine grandchildren, and 18 great-grandchildren.

Although Big Pine and Bishop are only 16 miles apart, the trip, before the paving of Highway 395, took all day. The Bishop Rossis, therefore, had little contact with the Big Pine branch of the family. Joe Rossi tended to his orchards on Rossi Hill until about 1930. Then, according to his son Louis, "The City of Los Angeles was buying up property up and down the Valley. My father found that he wouldn't have enough water to keep all his property irrigated, so he sold most of the ranch to L.A., and kept Rossi Hill, where he later had a tungsten mine. He was bitter about having to sell off his orchard — he had put a lot of his life into that ranch." Joe Rossi, in his later years, had a nursery business in Bishop. He died in 1957, at the age of 89.

Mary Rossi Serventi and her husband Anton lived in the house they built on Line Street in west Bishop until they died, he in 1918 and she in 1944. Their oldest daughter, Margherita, married Mijo "Mike" Milovich in 1922; they built a house next to the family home at that time. Mike Milovich was an immigrant from Yugoslavia who had come to America to work in the mines.

Ray Milovich, son of Margherita and Mike, tells the story of his father's coming to America: "My dad had a brother named Jocko, who had come to America and was working in a factory in DeKalb, Illinois. He heard that jobs were available in the gold mines at Goldfield, Nevada, and managed to work his way out there in about 1906. To be able to bring his brother to the U.S., he highgraded ore by rubbing the black mud which contained the gold into his hair, then when he got home, washed it into a pan and recovered the ore. When my dad got over here, he and his brothers (there were three) worked on sewer and tunnel construction jobs in Los Angeles until they got typhoid and decided to leave the city. In 1910, they worked on the L.A. Aqueduct in the Owens Valley." Later, Mike worked as a construction foreman on several power plant projects and at a copper mine.

"Then," according to Ray, "he moved to Big Pine and later to Bishop, where he met my mother. They built the house there on West Line Street on the family property. My dad, while prospecting in

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*A recent photograph of Tony Rossi's daughters Estelle and Virginia ("Babe") in front of the Rossi homestead in Big Pine.*

*A recent photograph, left to right: Louise Serventi Clarkson, Harriette Allison, Louis Rossi, and Margherita Milovich.*

**Rossi Family** *continued*

the Sierra, found a source of tungsten, which, at that time, was greatly in need. Although the government experts told him that building a mine at that location — 11,000 feet up on Mt. Tom — was impractical and near impossible, he went ahead and did it anyway, and made the mine pay off. I still find it hard to believe that he was able to build a road to that mine. To look at it, you'd never think it could be done."

From all accounts, Mike Milovich was an iconoclast, one who felt that a person should try to do as much as he could, and not be dissuaded by those who saw only the difficulty and not the possibility. Although not by blood a Rossi, he belonged by virtue of his spirit.

Margherita's sister Louise went to work for the telephone company in Bishop when she got out of school. There, she met and later married George Clarkson, one of the first linemen in the area. They moved from Bishop to what was known as the Jeffery Ranch, 40 miles out of town. "The Jeffery Ranch," says Louise, "was a great big ranch out in the middle of nowhere, but there was a big fancy house there, surrounded by gardens. Dr. Jeffery, who owned the ranch, lived there with his family. We were self-sufficient there; we even had our own electrical generating plant. I did have to drive my two boys into Bishop every day for school, as there were no school buses in those days. There were times in the winter when I dreaded making that drive."

The Clarksons lived at the Jeffery Ranch, which is now known as the White Mountain Ranch, for 17 years. Louise Serventi Clarkson, now a widow, lives in Bishop, as does her son Donald and his family.

### Today and Tomorrow

The Rossi family today has members distributed in many parts of the West, but the Owens Valley is still considered to be central to the family heritage. A Rossi reunion, expected to draw upwards of 400 family members, will be held this summer in Big Pine. There, aunts and uncles and cousins will come together to eat and drink and laugh and cry, and tell stories of an immigrant family who weathered adversity and earned that most valuable of titles: Americans.

There is a continuity, a feeling of security, that comes with growing up on the same land as one's parents and grandparents; there is a subtle change in the character that comes with belonging to the land. The Rossis left to their descendents this enduring gift, one that will no doubt be passed on to future generations. In a letter to her mother, Harriette Allison writes of her feelings about her heritage:

"I am very proud to be a Rossi. I love to relate the story of how our grandparents left this Rossi Reservation to all of us. . . (My daughter) will bring her friends here, and she will be proud to tell the same stories.

"We'll walk this ground and be comforted to know that all of you walked here also. I love to think that my Grandma planted these snowball bushes and raspberries and mint, and that even though she's gone, they continued to bloom. Her hands touched this root that is still ours. If I ever move away, I will always return here, to my roots." □

*D. Criss Marquess photo*

# WESTERN MEN and DESERT GOLD

## Stories and poems of the Death Valley region

by LEE EARLY
and 'AIM MORHARDT

# THE ROSEBUSH

This is a true story. As true as any story can be after thirty years, for in that long span there is change as inevitable as may be found in the face of a friend. Truth is a strange affair anyway. It seems to alter with one's age, until what was believed implicitly years ago is no longer so, yet things that seemed like fairy tales then have gradually become plausible.

When Joe Garson told this tale I thought he was talking of friends of his; Frank Warren and his wife Rose. Now with memory's eye and from the way he looked and talked of a woman and a home and a pattern of life as if of something he had loved and lost, I believe it was the story of gentle old Joe himself and his own wife, whom I never met.

It seems strange to me that one can remember the way a man looked thirty years ago as he talked of a woman and a mine and now can't recall a telephone number or even yesterday's letter in a pocket. Probably as we grow older our memories sort out some things to hang onto which have a touch of the eternal in them. For instance, there was a little wooden headpiece made of a Carnation Milk box. You remember, one of the kind made without nails but put together with short interlocking fingers. This was on a lonely windswept hill in the Mojave desert where there were traces of an old cabin with a prospect hole nearby following an unpromising seam of gold ore down to discouragement at about a hundred feet. On this little cross was inscribed, burnt into the wood with a hot piece of metal, "Linda, age 5, beloved daughter of ——." It takes little imagination to know that with each letter burnt into the wood there was a scar burnt into the heart of the man or the woman who did the inscribing. It burned itself indelibly into my memory as well, especially how the little notched pieces of wood looked like small fingers. I could see in my mind's eye a little girl with flaxen hair and blue eyes; beautiful, but what little girl could be five and named Linda and not be beautiful? Things like that are well remembered as has been this story of Joe Garson's.

Now Joe was foreman at a chemical plant by the side of a desert dry lake. A plant, which by using modern wizardry extracted useful products from the bitter brine that so many men cursed because it was undrinkable, but which turned into a better gold mine than the treasure they were seeking. After the fires were banked and the graveyard shift was really of the dead at two in the morning, I used to sit near the open door to look out over the high Slate Range and drowse a little. I was old Joe's helper then, and Joe was afraid that the master mechanic, who didn't sleep well, was likely as not to come down and check on the hands. If he found me asleep there would be a blue slip in my box. Joe must have liked me, for very often he would pull over a box and talk.

Of all the tales he told, real desert stories out of life spent on it, none has remained so clear as this, and though he was doing it to keep me awake, he was also, I suspect, unburdening his soul of memories which kept crowding in upon him, especially at that hour of the morning.

Rose was born in Ehrenberg, a rich placer gold camp in the Colorado desert — the real low desert, while Frank was born and of the high desert at a ranch in Smoky Valley, Nevada. You know, some people who live in the really low desert country never learn to love it and are only sojourners even though they live a lifetime there. It's different with the high desert. Its people love it, that land of eagles and wild horses where there is always a hint of frost in the air even on summer mornings. They remember the warm brown hills, the scrub juniper and pinon pine, the mile high valleys with the white bitter unmelting snow of alkali where the dancing dust devils whirl and twist. The Indians say these latter are the spirits of their ancestors rising from the earth for one last look at the land they loved so well before whirling away in a mad dance of ecstasy and grief to rise into the clear blue sky joining that vast awareness brooding over the high desert.

Well, Rose was named by her mother after the flowers of that high desert which grow wherever there is a little running water. Her father was a boomer. One of those men who followed strikes all over the country, always believing that the next camp was the true Eldorado, yet forever getting there too late. The good ground was always taken by the time he shepherded his wife and kids to the scene of the strike. In fact, the horse and mule and covered wagon of "Too Late Jones" were known from Canada to the Mexican border.

Living as she had to live made Rose hate the desert, high or low. No home, just the covered wagon or shacks, with a little schooling picked up between strikes. As she grew up, there was a gnawing desire in her heart for a place to put her roots down. She had spent a summer with an aunt in a small town that nestled in the shadow of the High Sierra, and the creeks, flowers, grass and beautiful trees fascinated her. She could never get over the wonder of a lawn; its velvety feel and fragrance; its heavenly coolness in the shade on a hot day; all the things you feel but never savor, you who live your lives in the green lands.

She made up her mind at that time that this was for her, and when they left her little wornout mother in a cemetery near Daggett, Rose strewed desert flowers on her grave and left for Barstow. She was a very pretty girl then and had no trouble getting a job in Fred

Harvey's Eating House there. The "Harvey Houses" were spread from one end of the Western desert to the other, and he always picked the prettiest girls he could find for waitresses. He knew they wouldn't stay long but he didn't care. He was proud of the reputation that his girls mothered the West.

Frank, by this time, was on his way to being a boomer like Rose's father and he loved the life. Gold, silver, lead, anything that promised a dollar was his existence, and the deeper and more elusive the treasure was the more of a challenge it became to him. He was in the Calico hills when the Goddess of Fortune smiled on him. Just a little smile really, a few tons of silver ore in a small pocket worth maybe a few thousand dollars, and he hadn't then learned what only the very old or very wise men of the desert know, that it's the searching and finding that makes the treasure. No, he was hot for the hills as soon as he could collect his money from the smelter.

Thus it happened that he was in Barstow and met Rose in the Harvey House there. Rose looked mighty fetching behind a stack and a side of ham, and he, tanned, bearded and successful, looked equally well the other way round. There he was with two weeks to spend waiting for the final on his ore lot and though, to Rose, men were two bits a dozen and no market, something seemed to click between them. She didn't know at first that he was a boomer, and by the time she did it was too late, although she put up a game struggle.

The way of young men and young women is apt to be more precipitate on the desert than in softer climates. Something about the intensity of life there brooks no delay. Rose knew that this was exactly what she had sworn never to do, but found herself caught by the same urge that germinates the desert seeds at those strange unforeseen intervals rather than monotonously and certainly every year as in civilized places. And, in the last analysis too, memory softens pain, which, in part must account alike for large families and second marriages.

However, Rose's surrender when it came, was not as complete as Frank might have desired. In fact, she told him quite bluntly that he could have five years to make his stake in mining. Five years only, and, that failing by then she intended to live with her long cherished trees and grass. She made it plain to him that if he didn't make it by then he would have to find regular work and let her handle the money until they could build up enough of a stake to move. And Frank, with the divine certainty of the young agreed on his honor to abide by her contract.

Well, Frank mined all over the West for five years and Rose did just as she said she would. After all she'd been through it and turned out to be a pretty good miner herself. She could hoist dirt from a hundred foot shaft and wheel it out over the dump like a man. She even learned to sharpen steel, watching the straw color in the hot iron travel down to the tip and quenching it in the water barrel just short of having it too brittle. The two of them survived cloudbursts, snow storms, sand storms, heat, cold and hunger, and if she didn't like it she never said a word.

Sometimes she was a little down in the mouth when Frank got to talking with the boys about this and that new strike, but in the main she really lived up to her part of the bargain. Even though Frank did make a few dollars here and there, the five years came to an end leaving them five years older and not one whit nearer either his or her dreams.

Rose held Frank to his word. When the five years were up they were in Nevada and he picked up work in a town out of Austin. It was a high altitude camp in the gold country. By high altitude we mean over seven thousand feet, not Colorado high but high enough.

The camp had produced millions, and all out of two mines. One was owned by a Senator from Carson City and one, The Raven, by stockholders — a corporation mine. The largest was the Senator's, "Jumbo," long known as a good gold producer. Frank had a friend who was superintendent of The Raven and he offered him a job as hoist man at the mine.

When Frank and Rose came in town it was booming and there wasn't a place to stay for all the gold in the Jumbo. They wouldn't have found a house if old Salty Williams hadn't become disgusted with the drift he was running and sold out to them. It seems that Salty had claimed a fraction between The Raven and the Jumbo — ground that had been surveyed incorrectly and which ended up belonging to neither claim.

In those days you paced off your claims and hoped you were somewhere near right. Well, Salty got hold of a piece between the two which nobody owned and of course tried to sell it to both parties. It was a perfectly legitimate procedure but unfortunately he put his price too high so they left him holding it. To kill time he built himself a cabin on the fraction and ran a hole in the side of the mountain on a seam of rock that looked promising to him. When he got in ten feet or so he turned at right angles to the hill and burrowed away like a gopher in no particular direction. He really wasn't going anyplace; after all he expected to be bought out any day and so he just plugged ahead. In all, he ran two hundred and twenty five feet in that hillside — hand drilling, and probably he'd have been going yet if he hadn't struck the black granite in the face of his drift.

Now, the black granite was a bad rock in this camp we're speaking of. The miners called it the robber rock, or the devil rock, or, indeed anything worse that they could think up on the spur of the moment because whenever they got close to it the gold values dropped to nothing. On the other hand, the white granite, alaskite, was the good rock or the camp angel, because whenever they found it, it was in contact with schist in The Raven and the Jumbo and made gold ore rich enough to mint without milling.

Well, the only thing that Salty got out of his work was a little seeping spring about a hundred feet back in his tunnel and he piped it out to a barrel at the portal of his adit. So, he had a cabin and a spring and it just happened that he'd hit the old devil granite about the time Frank and Rose turned up, and was disgusted enough to sell out the whole works for five hundred to them, probably because, among other things he had a dream he wanted to prospect on down in the Argus mountains.

Frank settled to being a good miner and he literally had to stuff cotton in his ears when the boys got started talking about strikes and contacts and lost

mines and what-all as they do in a mining camp. He kept his promise all right but there in his back yard was Salty's drift and he couldn't take his eyes off it when he was home. There was the black granite and the white granite and a seam of gouge in between. Frank couldn't help thinking to himself that Salty should have gone into the gouge but he did not voice the idea to Rose for time made no difference in her determination to go to greener country, and yet he couldn't keep it out of his mind, try as he would, and of course the porch faced the drift.

It got so that Frank began to feel guilty just sitting out with his feet on the rail so it was in the nature of a relief when, one night, coming off shift he saw that Rose had gone down to the creek and dug up a wild rose bush, planting it right beside the water barrel where it would get enough to drink.

Well, the first thing you know that rosebush had got its roots down and climbed all over everything. The gouge scar was covered and Frank had to trim the trailers regularly before he could get in to clean out the pipeline. Less and less he looked at the hill and more and more at Rose, who had, of course, known all along what he was thinking.

The camp was booming. People were searching the surrounding hills, digging potholes all over. Occasionally someone would make just enough of a strike to spur everyone else on. Any strike was good talk at the bar, real or imaginary, and as a consequence the camp kept itself in a virtual fever over nothing. None of this meant anything to Frank. He had a job and a wife who loved him and a house away from the town. While he sometimes regretted that he couldn't take his time off in prospecting he was busy and contented enough not to care too much.

Then came the winter of 1904 and the whole desert fell under a pall of frozen fog and cold. The mines were having a terrible time trying to keep running. The mills couldn't get water because of frozen pipe lines. If they got water the concentrating tables would freeze with the water flowing over them, and the launders would ice up, and the men would cuss and shiver and get nothing done for huddling around a small fire in the mill building. It was obviously impossible to run, so both mines decided to close down for awhile until the weather warmed up. The ore was running short in The Raven anyway and the Jumbo wasn't turning out anything too spectacular so they laid off the men for a few weeks. There were no unions then to say yea or nay. All the men had to go on was the promise of a job when the weather warmed up. There was very little credit being extended so a lot of them drifted.

Frank and Rose didn't want to stay in the place over Christmas, so they decided to go to Tonopah where Rose's sister's husband worked as super for the old Consolidated. They got on the stage and started down the valley and met the frozen fog about halfway down and it was bitter cold. When they reached Tonopah, half the town was sick with some strange disease and the other half were doing the nursing. Rose's family was one of the ones who were sick so Frank and Rose fell to nursing them and helping wherever they could in the camp.

It was a bad sad winter for many in Tonopah. Everyone blamed the frozen fog. The Indians called it "Pogonip," or "Mist of Death." Doctors called it pneumonia. Maybe they were both right but in the end there were a great many people who didn't see the spring.

Rose was one of them, and Frank's heart died in the weary battle to try to save her. The years had brought them so close that the death of one was almost the death of the other. In the end, bereft of feeling, he wandered back to what had been their home, having no place else to go. A common tragedy, you say, but, believe me, none the less real to the individual confronted by it.

He took our Rose's little hoard which was to give her a new life and with a pain that convulsed his entire body put it away again. The future meant very little to him. He bought provisions at the store just before it closed up for good and retired to his cabin.

It might have ended there but the Senator, who had known Frank as a boy, was looking for someone to be watchman at the Jumbo and after much persuasion Frank said he would do it.

The Raven closed down. The corporation sold all the machinery, until there was only the headframe standing. Frank was alone in camp for a long time but he didn't notice it. He would sit out on the porch and watch the wild rose bloom by the water barrel with a mind as blank as a porcupine's. His real reason for being was gone, and with it all his ambition.

It didn't end there though. Pretty soon a drifter came into camp. A chap by the name of Monte. He had a gimpy leg and he pestered Frank for money, besides cadging all the meals he could. Frank had known him for a good many years and wasn't about to give him any money but it was nice to have someone to talk to and so he fed Monte and listened to the bonanzas to be found everywhere but the Jumbo.

Pretty soon Frank began to hear sounds down in the mine. Monte would come in for supper without an explanation of where he had spent the day, but Frank knew without asking. While Monte was underground Frank had to smile to himself at anyone going to so much trouble to get a stake. Monte, of course was sniping pillars. He was going to get his stake, win, lose or draw. You don't know what I mean about sniping pillars I suppose. Well, when they develop a mine they have to leave some support in between the footwall and the hangingwall so that the whole thing won't collapse on them. Sometimes they use timbers and sometimes they leave part of the ore as pillars. Generally these pillars are thick enough to really hold up the ground, but when the mine is worked out, along come the grave robbers. They snipe the pillars, whittling them down to where the only thing between a miner and a thousand ton of muck is a rock spindle the size of a piano leg at the bottom and a soft prayer. And sometimes the prayer doesn't work.

So there was Monte, sniping pillars and Frank running out of grub fast. In the end he had to go to Tonopah to get more and, although he might have liked to take Monte with him for company, the game leg wouldn't make it. So he went by himself — the hard way, on foot with his burros since the stage had stopped running.

It was a long trek to Tonopah and back so it was several weeks before he returned to the diggings. When he did he couldn't believe his eyes. The camp was filled with men and the men were filled with madness — gold madness. They were carrying sacks of ore on

their backs and some were coming up out of the mine shaft panting with the weight of their stolen treasure. Gold ore; rich, heavy and greasy. Ore such as never was seen in that camp before and indeed in very few places in the west. Gold ore so rich that some of it only needed the stamp of the eagle on it to make it the stuff of dreams come true.

There were gold madmen and gold madwomen too. I remember another camp, but that is a different story — so many times and places I remember. Everyone knew that Frank was the watchman so he managed to take some of the ore from those who hadn't got away fast enough and after arguing some of the others out of their loads he boarded up the old shaft and cornered old Dan Waters to get the story. Dan was the only man in camp without gold in his pockets. He too had a bad leg and couldn't climb down the shaft.

Monte had struck it lucky while Frank was gone. He found and trimmed several pillars with a crack shot or two and filled several powder boxes with high grade ore. Probably he had two or three hundred dollars worth in all — just about what he needed to grubstake him in the Panamints, and he had just about decided to pull freight before Frank returned and questioned him too closely.

As luck would have it Dan Waters showed up with a jug. Well, by the time the jug was half gone Monte had made up his mind that he would get his tools out of the old stope and go south. But when he saw his powder down in the drift and thought of carrying it to the surface a little rum devil whispered in his ear. "Why not give the old mine a parting salute," it said. Why not, he thought, what's half a box of powder?

He remembered the last round that the boys had drilled in the end of the old Golden Fleece stope. They had long-holed her with ten foot steel and never shot the holes. The back of the holes showed alaskite on the hangingwall and the old black devil robber rock on the footwall. In the middle no one knew what there was because about four feet in their steel had hit clay and plugged. So they quit, and the foreman looked at the round and said, "She's deep enough, boys. With the black granite on the footwall even if the white angel spreads her wings on the hanging it's no good; for the devil and the angel can not make gold. The Golden Fleece stope is finished."

She couldn't go on forever. Mines aren't like farms. In the end they are worked out no matter what your dreams may tell you. So — they left her cocked and primed for Monte, and Monte put in primers with long fuses and started to work getting rid of his half box. He filled the holes full and tamped with powder; lit the long fuses, gathered up his tools and climbed out. When he reached the surface the whole lot went off with a satisfying roar and Monte grinned to himself. But only for a second because he remembered that he had left his knife down in the drift. He had had it for many years and so decided to wait until the smoke cleared and go down and get it.

Well, he found it where he had cut fuses for primers in the little side adit. Just as an afterthought — for did ever a miner live who didn't want to look at the round he'd blasted — he decided to walk over and see what his shots had done. Fifty feet over he went to the track level where the old chute had been for the Golden Fleece stope. They had pulled it for timber before they quit so it was wide open and he just about lost his breath as he stood and looked.

There it was: the devil rock and the angel rock had mated and gold was the issue. It plastered the walls, covered the floors and dusted the tracks themselves for the whole fifty feet. Monte stood looking at the display in the light of his candle and felt a faint cold wind whisper down his back. He knew very well he had no business being there and even the fact of the treasure spread out before his eyes couldn't change the fact. Sure, he didn't mind robbing pillars — that was an old story, but this was more than he had bargained for. He was out of his class and frightened.

Recovering himself, he filled his pockets and a powder box and dragged himself up to the surface. He knew he couldn't tell anyone but he didn't have to for Tom was gone. So, still trembling a little he packed his burros and headed south. He kept telling himself that he'd better not say anything about it but by the time he reached Goldfield he had a terrible thirst and nothing to use as legal tender but some of the rock. So he plunked it down on the Silver Dollar Bar and the rush was on.

Well, the old camp came alive. The Senator hustled back when he received Frank's wire. He even bought out Frank's fraction for five thousand dollars telling Frank he could live there in the cabin for the rest of his life if he wished to. And so, Frank had enough now for all the things that Rose had wanted — the little house, gardens, flowers — everything. But Rose was gone.

The old camp grew. Men walked the streets at night because there were no rooms to be had at any price. Miners came back by the hundreds to work the mines and the mills. The old Raven mine and mill was soon going again with a big crew, and its hundreds of stamps were hungrily munching on low grade ore — the same kind of ore they were running when they closed down before. But now the owners were prodded. They were prodded with the golden prod of the new strike at the Jumbo.

It wasn't surprising. The new stope — the Golden Stairway — was putting out fifty to one hundred thousand dollars a day. Among the many so-called million dollar stopes in the West, this was it. Before it was finished it produced ten million dollars, maybe not a record but pretty close to it.

Well, as we said, the miners poured in. After them poured in the people to mine the miners. Saloon keepers, gamblers and soon the soiled angels from less prosperous camps returned to the little green houses in the gulch. Thus things were again normal in the camp.

The surrounding country was filled with madmen. Ha, you don't know what I mean by madmen. They are men in a new gold camp, digging in every little seam, promising or unpromising for miles around, because whenever there is a strike in an old camp the whole country for miles around has a golden glow and every abandoned claim is taken and becomes in the eye of the taker a virtual Comstock lode. And up goes a headframe and down go the men into the earth. Just a little deeper and they will strike it, they say. It has to be there — look at the Jumbo turning out thousands every day. And the gold that isn't there burns the soles of their feet and the days aren't long enough for

their drilling.

But it all ends with a deep hole and a barren muck pile and in it are buried their hopes and dreams and yes, their money too. All by digging for gold that couldn't be there by the very nature of the rock that they were digging in, and the God of the desert, watching from that high lonely hill, must laugh to think that so many people could be so foolish.

I remember one hole that three men worked in, in bitter disappointment for three or four months with goodwill. Then they struck upon some gold and overnight everything changed, and it ended with one man with his jaw shot off and one man with a bullet through his heart and one man with a scarred conscience the rest of his life, for before even the man was buried the gold was gone, shot out in one round. And the God of the desert must have been sad that people could treat each other so. We must speak softly, for one of these men still lives.

Well, the old mill at the Jumbo snarled and roared and fed on a hundred tons of low grade a day. It never had a chance to feed on that Golden Stairway treasure though. That was being mined differently. You see, anything as high grade as that has to be mined by people who are strictly honest. Now don't argue, I know what you're going to say. Anyway, the Senator figured that the fewer people he used the better his chances were of saving his gold. He had bought Frank's fraction, in fact had known Frank and his father for years so he probably figured he had bought his loyalty. So he prevailed upon Frank to go to work in the Golden Stairway stope with another helper.

The stope started at about the three hundred foot level, pitching up at a forty-five degree angle, just right for ore to flow down without mucking. Well, there they were; the black granite, the devil rock on the footwall and the white alaskite, the angel rock on the hanging wall and Frank and his helper Joe in the middle and they trod that golden stairway right out to blue skies, almost three hundred feet. And every shot Frank said was a shower of gold, 'Lluvi de oro,' as the Mexican trammer called it. A shower of gold and it was a beauty to behold. Frank said that when the gold lay on that black granite footwall after a shot it would look like jewels on a jeweler's black velvet cloth.

But the Mexican trammer never got a chance to tram any of that ore. Frank said it was the only time he had ever seen a Senator push an ore car. But push it he did, all of one summer, he or his superintendent. No one else got the chance to tram that ore into the assay office where it was treated by the assayer before it went to the mint. It didn't need any other treatment! You see, they had to have honest men and the Senator vouched for the super and the super vouched for the assayer. No one needed to vouch for the Senator I guess; anyway he owned most of the mine, but years later they said that after the stope was worked out that the super and the assayer must have been very high salaried men because the super ended up with a beautiful orange grove, a large house and a swimming pool down San Bernardino way and the assayer with a very large cattle ranch in the Sacramento valley.

Well, that is the way mines worked in those days. Frank and Joe knocked down a fortune each day and for it received five dollars. Frank says that's all they ever got. No bonus, even, when they could have rubbed twenty-five dollars worth of gold in their hair.

Yes, that's no joke. Why do you think that the gold mines have change rooms and wash rooms for the miners? Do you think it is because they figure cleanliness next to godliness? No, not quite. In Utah, the coal mines aren't particular how the men come off shift, dirty or not — let'em clean up at home. But not if you have a shift's pay in gold under your fingernails.

Why, to a good high grader each shift would have been worth several hundred dollars and that's the truth. At Belmont and Goldfield the good men paid for their jobs — and made fortunes. That was in the days when mining a stope was no picnic. Sure they had air, but only for drifting and sinking. They hadn't yet devised a way to drill a hole overhead and so, in the Golden Stairway stope Frank and Joe did it the tough way, lying on their backs on a stull jammed up close to the heading and pounding in the holes with a singlejack and a short steel. The old timers, the original singlejack men, used to polish their hammer handles with glass, scraping and honing them until they shone. When they were drilling they would choke the handle close to the hammer, until, as it crossed the arc they would slide their fingers to the knob at the end. This would give them tremendous striking power for a simple hammer but it took very fine judgment — especially when your candle went out and you finished your round in the dark and the bad air. There are ghosts with you when you do that!

Before they had driven a hundred feet though, the Senator had heard of a new stoper. A stoper where all you did was to press a button and a stinger came out of the body of the drill and pressed the steel up against the ceiling. Then you turned on the air and it chattered, and to keep the drill from sticking you had to rotate it by hand. They called it the wiggletail because a man had to stand and wiggle it back and forth in a quarter of an arc swing so that it wouldn't stick; and all the time the dust was coming down into your face, down the back of your neck and into your lungs.

In those days one out of four miners had "Rocks in the box" the common name for silicosis. No laws like they have today to protect the miner. But it was so much better than hand drilling that the boys enjoyed using it. Now, when I see a pneumatic drill with lots of air on it, and lots of water, a buzzy, they call them, eating through rock at feet a minute I have to think back to the old wiggletail. Every once in a while even now I see an old timer operating a buzzy. He'll turn the air on, stand back a little bit, then if he's a cud man he'll put a cud of tobacco in one cheek and if he's a two-cud man he'll put one in the other cheek as well, and, as I say, turn on the air and stand back watching the thing rotate, whining like the hounds of hell. In a few minutes he'll square his jaw away, start swinging his shoulders, and with that unconscious swing, born of the old drill I'll know he's a wiggletail man, back on his old stoper.

All good things must end and there came a day when Frank knew he was getting close to the surface. He was finding roots and seams and there was a hollow sound to his drilling and he thought, "Well, I'd better load it kinda light cause I don't want to scatter the Senator's gold all over the hill."

*D. Criss Marquess photo*

He knew he had drilled his holes too deep so he stemmed back and put half charges in. They were using twelve to fifteen minute fuses now because they had to descend with three hundred feet of chain sections to track level. Frank lit the fuses and started down with Joe following him and as he went down he cleaned off the little bits of ore caught on the ledges. Just about at track level there was a little shelf that had — oh — several hundred pounds of rock on it, and as he kicked it down he couldn't help but think that there was enough gold in that little bit for everything Rose had ever wanted. Her garden, her green trees, her flowers, a few chickens, yes everything she had wished for. All of her dreams right here in this little pile of rock and —— but Joe was breathing on his neck and he dropped down. There is a strange feeling of urgency with live powder at your back and even if the fuses were long he couldn't blame Joe for wanting to get out of there.

They waited in the assay office until they had counted all the shots, found everything in order and then at last, he climbed the hill to the cabin.

The day was well over. It had been warm and he went through the house to the porch and started to sit down in the old chair. As he half sat he looked out where the barrel was, the slop-over spilling a little water for the rosebush at its feet and for the first time was glad that Rose was not there. Now there was only a jagged hole and the acrid scent of hot powder smoke on the quiet evening air. □

# THE ARRASTRA

Joe and I were sitting at the door of the boiler room. It was four o'clock of a September morning and the cool air felt very good after the heat inside. The newest of new crescent moons came over the Slate Range, fleeing the dawn. One always associates a new moon with the fading dying light of day and not with the shouting dawn, and to see it at the 'Little Dawn' seems out of place. Joe was in a pensive mood. I had known all shift that something was bothering him and when we were sitting out by the door I remember his look as he said, "Son, I think I will be leaving pretty soon. I have been here a year now getting a good grubstake — the longest I've worked for anyone since Mary died. I wouldn't have had to if I hadn't followed a blind lead; the worst combination in the world, just the blind leading the blind. I got stars in my eyes and followed that lead for two hundred and sixty five feet and five thousand dollars worth. Last but not least, right into this boiler room — and all for the lack of a little horse sense, which is the most uncommon thing in mining. Just trying to put the gold where it wasn't, trying to guess where it would go in place of following it. I have been following the trail of gold all my life and hot on the trail of it." Joe lapsed into silence as a whisper of dawn wind stirred the still air.

I pondered what he had just said, "hot on the trail," little knowing I was to understand very well later in my life, for I was to feel the thrill later on of hearing nuggets in the pan; the purr of the small ones, the harsher song of the larger protesting the feel of the rough steel against their golden hides. The large ones, ah, the large ones. You would wash off the dirt little by little and with each swish of the pan the song would get louder until at last with a shout one would lift its head in the gravel and you would reach for it with pounding heart and — hot on the trail.

I was to know the thrill of finding a rich vein when drilling in the hard and barren face, in rock so dense the drill would whine like one of the hounds of hell in protest when forced with an extra shot of air against the face. Then, suddenly, to have it shoot forward as if to the kill when striking the rich ore, and see the red rich pulpy mud gush from around the drill stem. Lastly, with pounding heart to reach for the little one-egg fry pan to test the drillings, washing nervously yet slowly as if afraid to look, yet finally seeing a golden mist covering the pan's bottom, a golden mist of dreams come true. Yes, I was to know what "hot on the trail" meant.

Joe turned away from the dawn to look at me, sitting so quietly there by him. "I pray the God of the desert lets me be hot on the trail until I die; hot on the trail of something. For some men it's women, business or butterflies, with me it has always been gold. With prospectors you know, it's either running a blind lead or building a mill before you have any ore. These things all give the mining game a bad name. Now the Mexican miners don't do it that way. Have I ever told you about my friend Manuel and his little mining company?

I wiggled my shoulders into a better position against the rough wall and shook my head. No one had to tell me I was going to hear another of old Joe's tales. I was as happy as only the young can be, with the dawn breaking on the clean desert and the ancient romantic thoughts of gold to keep me company.

Manuel and his family took up a little cabin at Lone Willow Spring away over in Mountain Springs canyon, built on a canvas lean-to and were in business overnight. And what a business; a business of mining, milling, living and happiness, and if you know Mexican families like I do you will know that the living and the happiness were the last things to be neglected. There was just a little water, just a trickle from a pipe into a barrel, but there is magic in a desert spring, a magic secret known only to wise desert dwellers, and that secret is to save every drop. Then there is enough for a cabin, a tiny garden. Enough at least to raise the peppers, and last but not least, enough for an arrastra. An arrastra? — just wait, you will hear all about an arrastra presently, said Joe.

Manuel had found a gold vein high above the cabin, way up where the first pinon pines grew. Yes, the first and the last for they grew only on the high peaks near the summit of the canyon ridge. It wasn't large, just a seam, but rich, and the Mexican knew that a bucketful is better than a ton if it's rich. Don't ask me how he found it. Just below him the white miners had driven a tunnel on a big ledge of low grade into the hill for five hundred feet and nothing. You might just as well ask me and get the same answer how the wild burros and the coyotes know where to dig to get water in the desert tanks in the malapai. I only know and know this well, they never dig a dry hole. It might be the Mexicans have a homing instinct for gold and silver, or it may be from the lore of the Mission Fathers who, in sending out the searchers gave each one two pieces of rock saying,

"Look for the marriage of these rocks, my children. This rock," and they would hold up a piece of limestone, "is a child from the mother of all, the sea, and contains all the fluxes to neutralize the hot mineral-bearing acids from this rock," and the padre would hold up a piece of andesite. "This rock is from deep in the earth and rich in its secrets. The offspring from the marriage of these two is the treasure you seek." And tell me if you can, went on Joe, any large mineral deposit in the Southwest that was not marked in some degree by the hand-made picks of the 'viejos' the old ones. The ancient

ones who didn't even have powder and when they found the rock too hard to pick would build a fire against the face even as Manuel used to do and would do today if he had a limey quartz that could be calcined by heat, dragging pinon limbs and breaking them with a sledge for it is easier to break them that way than with an axe. Then piling them high against the face and if there was an air vent the fire would burn most of the night and in the morning a man could pick out a little ore, such a weary little but so good ore from the rock made friable by the fire.

They made their own charcoal, the 'viejos,' by digging a pit and covering it with green logs and grasses, then finally with earth, leaving a little vent in the top to let in just enough air to carbonize the wood but not to burn it. All this trouble, mind you, to sharpen a pick or make a shovel. They got their smelting fluxes from the marshy sinks of the desert, and were self-sufficient even to their prospecting pans which were half a wild ram's horn. That is the reason indeed, for the old saying, 'horning for gold.' Yes, the ancients knew.

Manuel worked his claim, not for tons of rock but for the gold that was in them, moving as little material as possible to get the most out of the ore, leaving as little waste as he could and taking as little out of the mine, stacking it to the back and to the side of him like a gopher rather than move it an extra foot. He would make clever little arches and pillars to hold the ground after he had taken out what he could. He would squeeze into places you would swear a coyote couldn't get in and out of. The Mexican miner is so small and so careful that most of his prospect holes show no sign of a dump, even though he has broken tons and tons of rock. By worming your way into his workings you can see on all sides where he has back filled, made stopes and filled them, run drifts and blocked them back, leaving always a minimum of working space.

They were very clever and had few cave-ins because they kept the rock packed around them solid and tight. All of these things were good practice then and, son, I'm not at all sure they wouldn't be good practice today on a modified scale even in large mines, at least backfilling and keeping the mine secure with waste. I have seen where they have dug as deep as sixty or seventy feet going down by benches, shoveling up from bench to bench and climbing out on pinon branches which had the knots left on them for purchase. Ten foot ladders from bottom to top and a great deal of shoveling to get a pound of ore out. They would go deeper than that in places if they didn't strike the heavy sulphide ore. In fact sometimes even this didn't stop them. They would at times use a primitive process on that too, laying first a layer of pinon branches on the ground, then a thin layer of ore, then more pinon and more ore until they had a large mass like a funeral pyre, or, as they called it, a stink pile. Then they would light it and it would burn for four or five days. Some heavy sulphide ores, after they got started would burn themselves out and they did it with a horrible smell according to the old timers. This process would free the gold from its sulphur prison and it could then be amalgamated in the arrastra.

Really rich ore didn't even see the arrastra. It was ground out by the women and you can still see near some of the old mines, the smooth rocks where they laid these precious fragments for grinding. This they did with what they called a 'spring pole' which took the weight off the grinding rock. They would wear a hole into this rock, pound a wooden peg into the hole, put a noose of leather around it and attach it to the limber pole. This left the rock hanging just above the mortar where a move of the hand would bring it down to crush the ore, the pole returning it to position without the need of lifting it each time. Then they would grind and grind, and pan and grind.

Sometimes in the desert those twenty foot long spring poles are still intact, preserved in the dry air, though most of the mortars have been dragged away to the front porches of civilized towns.

Well, Manuel didn't have to mine like this. He had the lore of the ancients combined with the conveniences of the moderns, and it worked very well. He had this rich seam of red iron oxide ore, red as blood, and when he mined he always knew when his rock would be good ore, really rich greasy ore because it would then turn green with copper stain. Then it would blossom with gold and there would be happiness down in the canyon camp. Several sacks of this ore was a good days' work and Manuel and his son Pedro would pack this on their scrawny burro Pepito, who was a beast of all burdens and the motive power for the arrastra and really a member of the mining company family. Fot it was a mining company, Papa and the eldest nino doing the mining, while Mama Maria was in charge of feeding and housing, a most important part of any mining operation. All the family was active in it even to 'Least One' who spent most of her time in a tub that was really half a whisky barrel and which restrained her movements if not her howls when she wanted attention. When Papa and Pedro had had a good day, Mama could hear them high on the trail before they could be seen and into the pot would go more beans, even an extra tortilla for Pepito. When they would get almost to camp, Pepito, well in the spirit of the affair, would come sliding stiff-legged down the last shortcut from the switchback above the cabin, as who should travel a long roundabout way when burdened with the good ore?

There would then be dreams and happiness in the little cabin that would lift the shingles on the old roof. Now there would be milling as long as the pocket of rich ore lasted and, Joe broke off, I will tell you about that tomorrow night, I see the old man coming across by the tool shed and we had better be busy.

But the next night we had to blow down one of the boilers and clean the flues and after we got through using the steam and the long brushes we were both so tired and grimy that Joe was in no mood for more story. Fact is, such moods were irregular and it was several nights before I could get him on the track of it again. But finally, at the low ebb before dawn he dragged his chair over to where I was sitting by the door and continued as though we had not been interrupted at all.

Manuel's arrastra was a circular basin with smooth rocks in the bottom, laid not too tightly together and cemented. The outside wall of the circle was made of rocks too, and heavy, to take the beating that the grinding rock gave it as it slammed back and forth in

sliding around over the bottom. A long sweep fastened to a post in the center of the basin had a large flat rock attached to it, and Pepito was in turn fastened to the other end of it. When Pepito moved the rock had to, and Pepito, who was apt to be careless and remiss in his duties, was kept moving by three of the ninos who sat in a circle around him throwing small pebbles to bounce off his dusty hide. This of course, hardly could be felt but was a reminder that now was not siesta time, "gently boys," Papa would say, "for is he not our friend?"

Papa and Pedro would break the ore into little pieces on a big flat rock, and when they had the very good ore they would be most extremely careful, driving four or five stakes around the rock and covering them with blankets to keep any fragments from flying off into the sand. All the ore had to be broken down to walnut size before being tossed into the arrastra but before this Papa had put some water in it, just enough to get it started. Pepito would then go round and round in a circle, his head hanging kind of low because this part of the operation didn't appeal to him.

Papa would continue to feed rock into the basin, the good red rich ore, until he had four or five hundred pounds in it, and then it would gradually grind down into a pulpy mass. At this point something else had to be added and Papa would disappear into the house for a treasured bottle, heavy with grey quicksilver. A little of this would be cautiously added and then he would work with a pan to test the condition of his mix. He would be very, very careful, for if he dosed it too liberally it would "make the flour" in his words and then all the angels in heaven and Mama's good wood ashes couldn't put the batch to rights again. Papa knew that the white wood ashes were very good for scouring and cleaning gold so that the mercury would stick to it and form an amalgam which would then lie in the cracks at the bottom of the basin but not if there was too much mercury! Papa would pan and pan as the gold would free itself from the rock and get richer in the pulp, while all the time Pepito would continue on his boring circular path. Every so often Papa would test the amalgam with his fingers, panning a shiny button of it and squeezing it. If it stayed like Mama Maria's good dough for tortillas, soft enough to mold, he would smile at the boys and murmur a soft "bueno." If, however, he found free gold in the pulp he would cautiously add more mercury, always guarding against too much which might "sicken" the charge.

At such time as the gold was all trapped in the amalgam Papa would begin to add water until the pulp was thin enough so that all the heavy amalgam was most certainly in the cracks at the bottom. Then he would carefully open a little board gate and discharge the waste pulp while Pepito continued on his weary round.

This process would go on for days. It would take a day to grind a single charge of five hundred pounds, and many charges could be ground, usually as many, certainly, as would be contained in the pocket he was working. But like all good things, an end would come of it and Papa would either run out of good ore for the moment or the cracks in the bottom of the arrastra would be full of amalgam. If the cracks were full Papa would wink at the boys and say, "ah, almost ready for the harvest," and they would come and touch the little gray lump that he held very reverently.

There would be little sleep on the night before the harvest. It was an event too important to be taken lightly and everyone knew that an early start had to be made for there was much to do. All would be up with the false dawn and as soon as it was light enough to see Papa would empty the basin, which was kept full when not in use. Papa always said that it was best not to leave the treasure exposed.

Pepito was hitched to the long sweep again and with everyone's help, for the mud had by now packed in the bottom, was started on his endless circle. Papa began to thin the pulp by adding water, continuing until it began to slop over the brim. He would carefully pan the water to be sure that there was no amalgam in it, saying to the boys, "She is hiding in the bottom," for he was training them to be good millmen too. He would then take off the top board, and as the red bloody-looking pulp would come out over the spillway and start down through the sand, he would cross himself not without reverence, saying, "Sangre de Cristo," but never with irreverence, for was not the candle burning at the altar in the cabin even as it burned on the days when Pedro and Manuel worked in the dark underground. Then Papa would add yet more water, and with the boys watching would pan again, and, finding no amalgam would remove yet another board and continuing thus until the arrastra was completely dry.

With the family crowded around him Papa would pick some of the hard amalgam from the cracks and press it in his fingers where it would squeak and cry. Now the floor of the arrastra was as bright and smooth as the canyon cliffs after rain. Pepito was unhitched from the sweep and came too to join the audience. The Least One was taken from the tub and held in the arms of an older child. Three of the boys would hop into the arrastra, armed with spoons and brushes and pieces of iron, anything to clean the cracks of every trace of the precious contents. All this precious amalgam mixed with a little mud and quartz sand was placed in Least One's tub beside which Mama and Papa squatted panning, very carefully separating the metal from the silty remains. This went into a pan of clean water, each little button increasing the total slowly.

Finally all would be clean as human hands could make it and Manuel would take up the finished silver ball and with a flourish place it in a tanned sheepskin, carefully closing the corners and wringing it hard with his strong hands. From it would fall a glistening rain of droplets of quicksilver back into the water. The ball now, unwrapped, was smaller and drier. It would creak when Manuel pressed it. And now it was Mama's turn. Into the cabin she would go, returning with a large piece of tortilla dough, neither too soft nor too stiff; just right to mold but with plenty of moisture.

The boys meanwhile had a fire going and Papa would come out of the cabin too with the biggest fry pan. Into its center went the silver ball and over it the dough. Then, in twenty minutes, when the dough was burned so badly that even Pepito couldn't eat it, though of course being full of quicksilver Papa would hardly have offered it to him, off it

*D. Criss Marquess photo*

came. The dough was quickly cracked away and there in the center was a lemon colored ball which did not look like gold at all. If you saw it, son, you would be very disappointed, but Papa knew what to do. When it cooled a little bit he broke it into small pieces and put it into the blackened crucible that he had found down at the old assay office by the mill down the canyon, where they lay discarded by the dozen on the refuse pile. Into the crucible with the spongy stuff he would put cottonball borax that he had got from the marshes in the valley sink. Then from the cabin he brought some powder which he poured over the top and by this time the boys would have the old bellows going by the furnace where Papa sharpened his tools. In went the crucible to the middle of the now glowing coals where the heat was most intense, covered with an old piece of sheet iron. As the bellows puffed and blew the whole crucible was soon a white hot mass. At a time known to him by experience, Manuel would slip back the lid slightly and look at the contents. If it satisfied him, he, in turn, would have Mama take a look too. If she saw that all was well then the fire was left to cool, and in due time the still glowing crucible would be placed on a flat rock away from the fire. When the contents stopped bubbling, Manuel would chip the container gently until it fell to pieces and these pieces would all be dusted with gold. But he would pay them no heed for who should be anxious about the crumbs when the feast is on?

There on the rock would lie gleaming a beautiful slug of hot gold which Manuel then picked up with his tongs and threw into the bucket of water, where it sang and hummed of tortillas and beans and red chili peppers and meat in the pot and clothes for the ninos, and also a little wine for the fiesta.

Joe paused and looked at me.

"Where's the story?" I asked. "Did anything happen to them?"

"No," Joe replied with an amused smile on his face. "Nothing happened to them. The seam gave out and they are somewhere else now. But that way of life is about gone, son, and after all, I'm just reminiscing. I knew them a long time ago. Yes, I've had my own arrastra. It's part of that 'hot on the trail' I was telling about. You can't have dramatics in everything, you know. Theirs was just a simple family and a life I wish I could lead today..." Joe was silent. □

*D. Criss Marquess photo*

## OLD MINER

There was no ledge where the rock
monument stood
On the bare mountain flank,
No sign of ore,
Only a little path leading over the hill
And at its end a cabin
Refuge for trade rats now, the door ajar
And on the floor old letters, scattered.

Poor man he died on the way to camp,
On the open trail they found him there,
His bacon and beans in an old knapsack
And no one to know, and none to care.

For years he had lived on the
mountain side
Singlejacked rock which he hoped
would pay.
Seldom in town, his kin far off,
Little to live on — a hermit's way.

His sister wanted him down in Fresno
We read the letters, the dead don't care
But he never would go that much
we gathered
As for money, he didn't much
need it there.

His cabin was clean, just a little food
And samples scattered
from bed to door.
No gold in sight — there was
nothing there
You could hardly guess what was
waste, or ore,

But the trees in the valley below
were gold
And it sure came easy to understand
As we watched a gold sky on the
sunset range
Why he stayed, ore or not, in his
golden land.

*D. Criss Marquess photo*

## PROOF OF LABOR

The old man stood quiet as the
notary typed
The legal notice he had to file.
The Gold Hit claim, district unknown—
An open cut— another trial—

The notary typing was older than he,
Endless papers on worthless claims,
So many dreams she had
legally phrased
Now vanished and dead as their
owners' names.

Both so serious, desert born,
Gospel truth on the printed page,
Yet only the record of one blank hole
Out on a hill with the flowering sage.

## MINERS ARE FUNNY

It is much easier
To work in a store
Than to dig in a mine
And it pays more—

It is much easier
To have eight hour days
Than to muck your own drift
And your overtime pays—

It is much much easier
To do as you're told
At your little desk
And you don't get cold—

## HE TALKS A GOOD MINE

He'll never refuse a grubstake,
He'll always accept a drink,
Of bonanzas he has half a dozen
He'll sell you as quick as a wink.

But his shirt it is out at the elbows
Instead of jeans at the knees
'Cause he spends all his time
at the bar rail
Incessantly shooting the breeze.

He's a breed we can never be rid of,
He's the kind who is always around,
But he doesn't faze me—I don't see him
For *I'm* mucking the ore underground!

*Tom Ross photo*

# HUNTED

The man slouched wearily, leaning on an old powder box. He had ridden since dawn and was bone weary and stiff and sore. He had ridden clear from the Idaho border to get to this town on the hill and now that he was here he had lost his nerve, but at least he could sit here at the table and gaze through the open door to where the town sprawled on the hillside five miles away. That at least was safe enough, he thought. His horse shuffled wearily and he grew taut, cocked his head and listened intently. Then his tensed hand relaxed and he lowered it from his shirtfront. Hell, five years on the dodge, five years never knowing a good night's sleep. Five years of practicing that draw with your shirtfront always loose from one button and worn shining and smooth where your hand slid in and out from the shoulder holster. Five years of never having a coat buttoned was almost

worse than Carson — no it wasn't. He had sworn he would never go back to the pen. The judge had been pretty good though. He was the youngest of the crowd and it was his first job. He had gotten off with seven years, but seven years was a lifetime even though he had cut it down with good behavior. He had sworn he would go back to work the minute he was out, and he had, too. He'd gone straight and stayed that way. If only his partner Red had changed his spots, but Red was serving his full term for sure, for he had a temper that went with his hair.

The man glanced idly at the wall and noticed that it was lined with old newspaper proof sheets to help keep out the winter wind and his anger rose. "Damn that Gazette editor, that's his paper," he thought. "If he hadn't started that crusade against the even break I'd still be in Tonopah! He got the townspeople so riled up that they swore they would lynch the next victor in a street gun fight, even break or not, and the sheriff swore that even if there wasn't a lynching the man who won out would go to the pen. With seven years in Carson behind him what chance had he stood? If he lost he was dead — if he won he'd be back in jail." He shook his head to stop the flow of memories, but it was useless. He was doing so well too, working for the old Tonopah Divide and saving money. No one knew about his old trouble but Helen. He had told Helen quick. He was too smart not to lay that ghost. He saw again the old Tonopah-Tidewater eating house and the laughing faced, sunny haired girl waiting table. His Helen, and they were to be married just as soon as he saved a little money. She had believed in him — in fact she might be right there in that town on the hill now. Well, really, the whole town had thought he was doing well for Red hadn't shown up then. If only Red hadn't had that mean streak in him. Red blamed him for getting caught, said if he'd only shot that guard — those damned "ifs" again. If only Helen hadn't been so against fighting and killing — it was one thing she couldn't abide she said; his thoughts were jagged bits of glass to torture him.

He remembered only too well the turmoil in his mind when finally Red did finish his term and showed up in Tonopah too. How they had met on the main street and Red told him — told him, mind you, that they were pulling another job in a week. They were bitter memories. When he broke it to Helen that Red was going to tell the town about his record if he didn't play along Helen said to let him — she'd stick by him, but it was a different thing next time he met Red on the street. Something in him exploded and Red lay there as dead as yesterday's newspaper — yesterday's Gazette — he should have shot the Editor too while he was at it.

It would have been different if he had had sense enough not to carry a gun again in those years after he left Carson. But then, he had always had a feeling that Red was going to force him to use it when the time came. "Ifs" again. He hadn't even told Helen goodbye when he left Red for that last time. He left in a hurry with the clothes on his back — a tramp miner, a wandering field hand, just a plain tramp. More than that, a hunted tramp, always whirling when a hand touched his shoulder, even a friendly hand. I've dodged a thousand small town sheriffs and cops, he thought wryly. Always dodging and riding and riding——. Passing the days now gone into years, the bitter parade of endless days and always because of the fear of prison again. It was better to be out, anyway, but sometimes, he thought, not much better with never a loving hand in his. He often wondered about Helen.

As he sat thinking in the late afternoon light his gaze fixed on a calendar hanging on the wall opposite him. There was a faded picture of a pretty girl on it, a girl on a horse, dressed in a riding habit, wearing a Stetson pushed back on her head showing ringlets of gold like Helen had had. The calendar was from a Western men's furnishing store whose trade mark said, "Everything for men but women and whiskey!" No wonder the girl was smiling. There it was, outlined against the faded proof sheets on the wall. It was, he saw, the calendar of the year he left Tonopah. There were the days marked out before him — the very days when his wanderings had started — the days he had become all outcast. Sunday, Monday, Tuesday and the whole week and his gorge rose in him and he reached for his gun and with fury shot out each abbreviated day of the week in rotation. And they weren't days to him, they were troubles, and he said with each shot, heat, dust, rain, snow, no sleep, saddle gall, bone weary and hell fire! And he raised his gun and shot a hole through the hat of the girl on the horse, and the shot shattered the wood and the tired old calendar wearily shuffled to the floor and the man slammed out of the house and mounted his horse and rode away.

Through the open window the setting sun's rays lit up the fresh clean spot where the calendar had hung and some printing was clearly legible, written in the style of long years gone. Quote, "We had one of those so-called even break affairs on our streets last evening and one precipitate has departed this life and is not mourned. One Red Wilson who was hurriedly sent to his reward by a young man highly esteemed in town, a man by the name of Bud Adams. Now this was a bad method but it had its merits in this case since Wells Fargo has a price on his head due to the bills found in his wallet which came from the stolen payroll of the Western Queen. And a certain young lady at a certain restaurant in town has publicly proclaimed that she will wait for Bud until — and the rest was hidden by an overlap of the proof sheets.

*ABOUT THE AUTHORS:*

*Lee and 'Aim would rather make fifty cents at mining than ten dollars selling someone something. They prefer prospecting on beans to caviar at Perino's. They choose to see the little dawn on the desert ranges rather than over city buildings. They enjoy best making up western songs as they travel by jeep down some lonely canyon. Lee was born and raised in the Randsburg area, has mined gold the hard way and listened to all the old tales of treasure that drifted into that country. When he talks of robbing a pillar he knows from experience, remembering the gentle sigh one gave just long enough before dropping the roof to let his backward jump save him. 'Aim has only been on the desert twenty years, but he'll never be anywhere else.* □

# High Sierra Lodging

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### BISHOP ELMS MOTEL

233 East Elm Street, Bishop. Phone (619) 873-8118

19 Units. Cribs in rooms. Color TV. Air conditioned. Free ice. Queen beds in all rooms. Shaded lawn area. Fish cleaning and freezing facilities. Next to Bishop City Park.

See our ad on page 17

### BISHOP TOWNHOUSE MOTEL

625 North Main Street, Bishop. Phone (619) 872-4541

34 Units. Color TV. Air conditioned. Free ice. Swimming pool. King, queen, double and twin size beds. Direct dial phones. Off-season rates October 15 through April 16.

### MOUNTAIN VIEW MOTEL

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32 Units. Housekeeping units. Free cribs in rooms. TV. Heated pool. Air conditioned. King and full size beds. Direct dial phones. Real coffee. Off-season rates from October 31 through March 31.

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22 Units. King and full size beds. Color cable TV. Air conditioning. Swimming pool. Family units; kitchens/kitchenettes. Fish cleaning facilities and freezer. Horseshoe pit. Pets OK. Cribs in rooms. Weekly rates available.

See our ad on page 19

### THE VAGABOND INN

1030 North Main Street, Bishop. Phone (619) 873-6351 or toll-free (800) 522-1555

80 Guest rooms. Coffee shop on premises. Individually controlled heating and air conditioning. Color TV. Swimming pool. Sauna. Children's playground. Family units. Facilities for fish cleaning. AAA approved.

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55 Units. Cribs in rooms. Color TV. Heated pool. Air conditioned. Free ice. Queen and full size beds. Direct dial phones. Pets OK. Meeting room. Waterbed available. Member of Best Western.

See our ad on page 6

## INDEPENDENCE

### WINNEDUMAH COUNTRY INN

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20 Rooms. Bed and breakfast. Gourmet dining Friday and Saturday nights. King, queen, double and twin beds. Honeymoon suite available. Pets OK on request. Air conditioning. Beer and wine in the lobby. Walk to stores and Museum. Will clean and cook your fresh fish. Listed in *Bed and Breakfast Assn. Guide.* Featuring 'Hawaiian Hospitality.' Visa and Master Card welcome.

See our ad on page 69

## JUNE LAKE

### BIG ROCK RESORT

Box 126, June Lake, CA 93529. Phone (619) 648-7717 or toll-free (800) 462-5589

8 cabin units with kitchens, one to three bedrooms. Color cable TV. Fireplaces. Cabins have lake view. Mid-week rates available. Walk to restaurants and market. Located at No. 1 Big Rock Road off Hwy 158 as you approach the village. Visa and Master Card welcome.

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22 Motel and Housekeeping units. Fireplaces. Color cable TV. One mile from lifts. Walk to restaurants and stores. Off-season rates from May 1 through June 15 and the month of October. AAA approved.

## LEE VINING

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Box 57, Lee Vining, CA 93541. Phone (619) 647-6316

23 Units. Swimming pool. Color cable TV. Some kitchen units. Pets OK. Walk to restaurants. Views of famous Mono Lake. AAA rated.

## LONE PINE

### DOW VILLA HOTEL & MOTEL

310 South Main Street, Lone Pine. Phone (619) 876-5521

39 Units. King, queen, double size beds. Color cable TV. Telephones. Swimming pool and spa. Coffee in rooms. Some pets OK. Master Card, Visa, American Express, Carte Blanche welcome.

See our ad on page 19

### FRONTIER MOTEL

1008 South Main Street, Lone Pine. Phone (619) 876-5571 or toll-free (800) 528-1234.

56 Units. Direct dial phones. Color TV. Heated pool. In-room coffee. Newly remodeled and carpeted. Member of Best Western.

See our ad on page 6

## MAMMOTH LAKES

### AUSTRIA HOF MOTEL

Box 8227, Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546. Located at the end of Canyon Blvd. Phone (619) 934-2764

15 Units. Queen beds. Jacuzzi and sauna. Daily maid service. Phones

*continued on next page . . .*

available. Color cable TV. AM-FM stereo. Individually controlled heat. Coffee in lobby. Walking distance to ski lifts. Bar and restaurant on premises. Mid-week rates. Master Card and Visa welcome.

### KRYSTAL VILLA EAST

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All units fully furnished and modern. Kitchens/fireplaces. Sauna, jacuzzi, swimming pool, recreation room, laundry facilities. Short walk to shops, restaurants and night life. Special weekly rates. Reservations recommended during ski season.

See our ad on page 6

### MAMMOTH MOUNTAIN CHALETS

Box 513, Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546. Located at Mammoth's Main Lodge. Phone (619) 934-8518

One and two bedroom chalets. Ski in and ski out. Full kitchens. Telephones included. Color cable TV. Fireplaces. Plenty of open forest to enjoy. Reservations required.

### SIERRA NEVADA INN

Box 918, Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546 Phone (619) 934-2515; in LA area, call (213) 829-3515

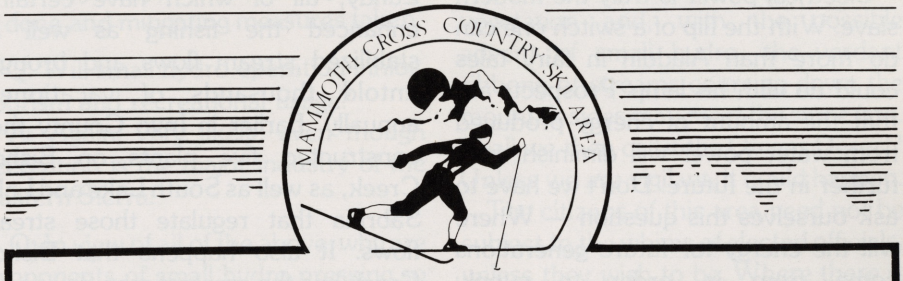
156 Units. Large rooms. Kitchens and suites. Color cable TV. Some fireplaces. Swimming pool, jacuzzi, sauna. Tennis courts in summer. Free transportation to and from Mammoth/June Lake airport all year; free transportation to and from Main Lodge in the winter.

### TAMARACK LODGE RESORT

P.O. Box 69, Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546. Phone (619) 934-2442

12 rooms in the Lodge; 25 cabins sleeping 2 to 21. Cabins have complete kitchens. Pets OK in cabins. Honeymoon cabin available. 'Bed and breakfast' in Lodge. Coffee, tea and hot chocolate in lobby. Lake-front restaurant on premises. Walk to cross-country skiing. Ski rentals available. Visa, Master Card and American Express welcome.

See our ad this page

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**P.O. Box 69 Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546** **(619) 934-2442**

# HYDRO
## A NATURAL SOLUTION

**Bill Symons, owner of Hi-Head Hydro, presents the advantages of hydro development in the Owens Valley.**

Water always runs downhill if it can. Anyone who has ever observed a stream or river flowing knows that the force of water can exert vast power; when harnessed it can be turned from seasonal destruction to useful energy.

In 1944 one-third of the total electric energy in the United States was supplied by water power. Today or about 40 years later, the pendulum has swung to these quantities: Coal generation 53%; Hydro 13.7%; Natural gas 13.6%; Nuclear 12.6%; Oil 6%; other, which would be wind, solar, geothermal, waste heat, etc., only about two-tenths of one percent.

Electrical power is truly the modern slave. With the flip of a switch one can do more than Aladdin in fairy tales could do with his lamp. Prospects are that the amount of energy produced from water power will diminish even further in the future. Don't we have to ask ourselves this question — Where will the energy for future generations come from in order to supply businesses, industry and homes for our children and grandchildren as well as those beyond?

The continuous expanding electrical energy thirst will always be with us.

We have those who don't want Nuclear or Coal generation, but nearly 66% of the total U.S. power comes from those two sources alone today.

With each passing day we see the resistance build to Nuclear Power. It has become so great that it may be totally possible that there may never be another Nuclear plant built in the U.S.

In the last few days we have all heard and read about the harmful effects of Acid Rain, which is regarded as harmful to every living thing on earth. There are those who contend that it may be more harmful than any pollution that man creates.

In the last couple of years much has been written and said about Hydro in the Eastern Sierra. Inaccurate statements have been made about projects in general to the extent that an anti-hydro sentiment has developed.

What has the Hydro that has operated for 60 or 70 years in the Eastern Sierra done? Has it been destructive? You will have to judge.

In Mono County the power company built Poole, Rush Creek and Mill Creek power plants. Along with those plants, they created seven lakes, Agnew, Gem, Waugh, Ellery, Tioga, Saddlebag and Lundy, all of which have certainly enhanced the fishing as well as stabilized stream flows and brought untold thousands of vacationers annually. Earlier in Inyo County they constructed five plants on Bishop Creek, as well as South Lake and Lake Sabrina that regulate those stream flows. It also happens that Bishop Creek has the greatest man day-use of any stream in Inyo County. Did Hydro destroy it? Absolutely not.

In the late '40s the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power built Crowley Dam and constructed the Owens Gorge plants. The gorge was dried up, but just stop and think how many times as much fishing was created at Crowley Lake. Would it be 100 times as much— 1,000 times as much or 10,000 times or even more? No one really knows, but it is a fact it took a hearty person to climb in and out of the gorge. Anyone can fish Crowley. What has Crowley and the nine earlier-mentioned Edison Lakes added to the economy? The answer has to be a tremendous amount.

If there ever was an opportunity to add to the ever increasing electric requirements, it is now at hand for many reasons. There is every indication that the world is entering a climatic change and this area is no exception as everyone is aware. Past history reveals that the water from this area more than once overflowed Owens Lake to Searles Lake at Trona, creating the vast chemical deposits there. Only time will tell if we are entering another era of abundant water; however, if we are it would be most unfortunate if some of the surplus waters of some of the Eastern Sierra streams were not harnessed to produce clean, non-polluting energy from a renewable resource — water.

It is true that the Eastern Sierra is unique with its many trout streams, its resources and its economy. Hydro has not destroyed the area, its resources, or its economy, but in the eyes of many that I have talked to the concensus is that it has been enhanced by Hydro.

My son and I happen to be so-called Hydro developers, and have one plant in operation on fishless Piute Creek in Chalfant Valley, north of Bishop at the base of the White Mountains. We invite anyone to visit any time and really see for themselves Small Hydro in operation.

As to any future Hydro projects that may be built, I would be the first to say that they should not be built everywhere there is an application pending. However, there are streams with an abundance of water that can support both the existing resources as well as Small Hydro.

My son and I do not have an application on a natural fish stream.

All future energy needs have to come from somewhere. Is some Small Hydro to be or not to be? □

# HYDRO

## WHAT PRICE POWER?

**Ron Kister, mayor of Bishop, submits the argument against further hydro development in this area.**

Progress, as with beauty, lies in the eye of the beholder. Some equate progress with simple growth, some with modernity, some with monetary rewards, some with exploitation of resources, and some with an improvement in quality of life. I believe only the last equation to be valid. Will the development of small hydro-electric plants in the Eastern Sierra contribute to the betterment of life in the area? Let me try to present a balance sheet to answer that question.

The Eastern Sierra in general, and the Owens Valley in particular, is a unique and magnificently beautiful area of this nation. It is, also, a finite and fragile resource. We cannot be seduced in our thinking to believe that its vastness will protect it from depredation. In the past century, the passenger pigeons darkened the sky by their numbers and were considered inexhaustible. Today, thanks to indiscriminate slaughter, not one passenger pigeon remains alive. There is a sobering analogy to be drawn between our beautiful valley and that extinct bird.

Allow me to pose a series of questions and to answer them to the best of my ability, albeit from the bias of trying to preserve this sanctuary.

Q: Will small hydro lower utility rates?

A: No, since output will be sold to major power companies at the highest rate and distributed, system-wide.

Q: Will small hydro create additional jobs?

A: Only during plant construction. Thereafter, each plant can be operated by one or two personnel.

Q: Will revenues created by small hydro remain within the community?

A: Probably not, since the majority of applicants are located outside the area.

Q: Will the valuation of small hydro plants contribute much to county tax revenue?

A: Assuming four small hydro plants, each evaluated at $1,000,000, tax return would be $40,000, less than many other enterprises.

Q: How much of California's total energy needs would small hydro provide?

A: Inyo-Mono plants, if all approved and operational, would produce less than 1%.

Q: Will small hydro development damage riparian lands and fish and wildlife habitat?

A: Very likely, unless careful planning is done and mitigating measures taken.

Q: Will small hydro operation inhibit tourism and recreational usage?

A: Again, very likely, even though recreation is the major industry of the Eastern Sierra.

Q: In view of all of the above, why are proponents of small hydro pressing so hard for approval?

A: Greed!

Now, if the foregoing has appeared unsympathetic toward potential small hydro developers, I make no apology. I think, in fact, that the answer to the last question sums it up very succinctly. Is there a legitimate place for exploiters in the Owens Valley? Well, I believe valley residents are experts on that subject.

The Owens Valley and adjacent Eastern Sierra lands provide the "watering trough" for the City of Los Angeles. Are we now to place our mountain streams into penstocks, so that the ravage may be complete? While most area residents have accommodated to an uneasy truce with the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, which could be disrupted by increased underground pumping, we do not need the final humiliation of small hydro plants.

It must be borne in mind that the largest industry of the Eastern Sierra region is recreation. With more than 15 million visitors per year, it would be foolhardy to jeopardize any part of this lucrative income source by degrading our mountain streams, especially since such an action could cost local jurisdictions far more than the return from small hydro plants. As I said in the title of this piece, "What Price Power?" once the streams have been contained within steel pipes and channeled through turbines, there will be no turning back. The Owens Valley, for many decades, has not been lush with vegetation and, with the possible advent of small hydro, the verdant ribbons of streams coursing down the mountainsides may meet the same fate. Shall we then call it the Owens Desert? Unless we are vigilant, it could happen.

The citizens of this area need not be subject to the whims of elected officials, unless they wish to be. Where there is citizen lethargy, however, or a disinclination to become involved, the populace is often surprised to find that events not to their liking have occurred.

In 1978, at the height of the energy crisis, the U.S. Congress passed the Public Utilities Regulatory Policy Act. This act allowed for energy production from streams, wind, solar, etc., but with little attention to environmental consequences. It was panic legislation and it is only now being examined for potential degradation of natural resources. Fortunately, government officials from the Federal to the local level are taking a hard look at the excesses inherent within the terms of the act. It appears that the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission will

*continued on page 70*

# CAST IRON ART

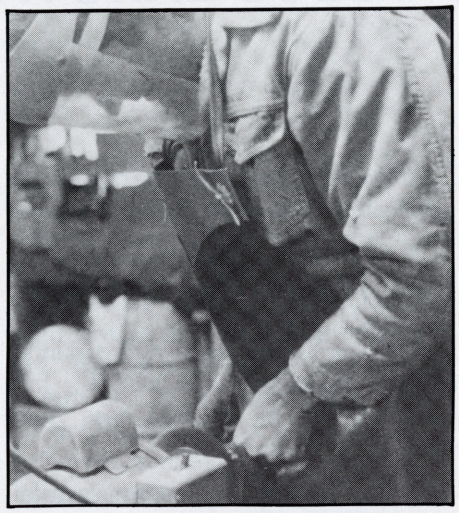
## WARM MEMORIES OF THE PIONEER SPIRIT

by Marie Taylor

The arts of preservation and restoration create a dimension beyond time and space, a doorway through which we may enter and bring the past back to life.

"Look at this piece, closely, do you see the intricate swirls and curls of the iron? It's a leg off a stove that's close to one hundred years old, a piece I've needed for one of my works." That's Dick Beach speaking, a teacher, artist, mountain-climber, and cast-iron stove preservationist.

Scattered throughout Owens Valley's high deserts and surrounding mountains are cast-iron remnants of an earlier day. Piles of rusty junk, you may say. But through the magic — and hard work — of restoration, this useless oxidized metal is transformed back into the cast-iron stove, the almost-forgotten heritage left behind by the early settlers and the mining men.



*The process of restoration begins. . .*

Beach's interest in what most people see as "junk" began in 1971, when he found and began work on his first stove. "I didn't know anything about restoring stoves when I found the first one. But I felt in it the memory of the people who lived and struggled in this area; their human side, all their hopes and disillusions, were so apparent in that discarded stove."

Only one person in the Bishop area, 85-year-old Billy Young, knew how to weld and craft cast iron. Beach began going to his shop every day after his classes, helping him out so he could learn exactly what was involved in stove restoration. He learned that time, work and patience could transform ancient rusted memories into works of art. "After three years, I was able to do clean work that I was proud of."

This interest has grown over the years, fueled by Beach's abilities as an artist and mountain-climber. "There is so much that has been overlooked when it comes to these vast stretches of mountains and deserts. The power and spirit of the mountains and its people is being forgotten faster than the remnants can be put together. In my own small way, I collect and try to recapture a portion of the past so that if we finally stop rushing through life at our insane pace, when we stop building, conquering, and growing thoughtlessly, we'll have the simple beauty of these relics of our heritage to admire," says Beach of his avocation.

Cast-iron stoves traveled west with the homesteaders and miners. Many took the seafaring route around the Horn to the frontier coastal cities of San Francisco, Seattle, or Los Angeles. Others hitched a ride in wagons cross-country from St. Louis. These early wood stoves arrived with little fanfare — the "Victorian rocketships" of the civilized east were routinely stripped of frills, sometimes also of bread warmers and even legs; they had come to get the job done.

A wood stove in a pioneer home was the focal point not only of family life, but also of survival. No mercy was shown; winter use, 24 hours a day, resulted in warped, burned-out shells. Says Beach, "I've found pieces that are miracles of ingenuity, stove walls patched and repatched to eke out the last ounce of efficiency."

The most common brands were Bridge-Beach, Great Majestic, Home Comfort, Wedgewood, and Buck's. The Bridge-Beach, circa 1880, could be identified by its flowery ornate castings; the Majestic, circa 1890, carried a sailing ship logo, the Home Comfort, also from the 1890s, either a hearth scene or a man tilling wheat. All these stoves were manufactured until the turn of the century in St. Louis. Wedgewood's distinctive styling and the deerhead of Buck Stoves are still in production today.

Virgin iron from the ground, the finest quality, was used for the early stoves. Handcarved wood molds or sand casts were created by artisans for casting the metal. Pride in workmanship took precedence over labor costs, and the result was efficient air-tight stoves sporting exquisite designs.

Thousands of foundries created these masterpieces. Casting of the metal, particularly with sand casts, was excruciatingly labor-intensive.

*continued on next page . . .*

Regrettably, the art of preparing molds was lost as the technique of welding and mass-production replaced the individual craftsman.

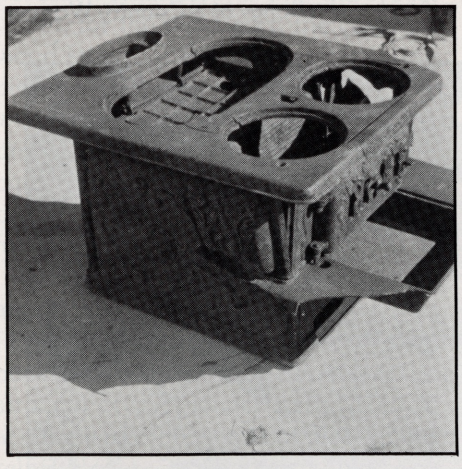
"The term 'air-tight' is not new," notes Beach. "Competition was fierce, and the finest quality was expected by the customer. The handcrafted stove parts were designed to fit together perfectly, and they did! This is the art I long to see preserved, much as other people find pleasure in refinishing antique wood furniture."

When these stoves were shipped from the foundry, they were crated in parts, never assembled. Again, the ingenuity of the pioneer is evident. "A friend of mine acquired a crated 'gold-coin' stove," says Beach. "Last I heard, he'd put it together 54 times, in that many different ways, and he's still working on it!"

efficiency could not be denied.

Wood stoves installed at a homestead stayed there, when and if the occupants moved on. Even if a house burned down, the wood stove was seldom reclaimed. Miners, if they were fortunate enough to have a mule, did move their stoves to new prospecting sites, abandoning them only when they could no longer find any means of repairing them or replacing lost parts.

Through years of disuse, these stoves remained cast-offs, ignored except for suffering an occasional ignoble end as a support for a stone fence or shelter for a pack of jackrabbits. During World War II, many stoves in this area were reclaimed for their quality metal, and again they were given a chance to serve mankind, but many were left behind.



It should be added that most "western" owners of these early Victorian stoves were not enamoured with their looks. Nestled between rough-hewn bedsteads and split-log dining tables, the stoves were incongruously out-of-place. But it was the Victorian era, after all. And their

Now, Dick Beach works to bring them back to life. "First I take a photo of where the stove was found to give it a personality and a past. The area is searched meticulously for pieces, then all is carried out by backpack. By moving slowly and resting a lot, I can carry as much as 150 pounds. Once at home, I photograph it again, taken apart, to help in identifying parts seen lying in the mountains on later trips."

Then the work of cleaning, welding, and shaping begins. It usually takes parts from five or six different stoves to make one complete functioning unit. Each piece is painstakingly cleaned with a wire brush, to preserve the intricate carvings. Sandblasting would be easier, but would result in pitting and the destruction of the delicate time-worn patina which so intrigues Beach — the soul of the stove, the soft luster which reflects the "presence of old-timers warming their hoary hands on a winter's evening. . .what tales they could tell."

The puzzle of parts begins to take shape. A missing piece is found near Lone Pine, another appears 50 miles away. "To finally see a finished nickle-plated Home Comfort, its delicately-thin mica-plated windows reflecting the warm orange of the fire, is my reward," says Beach.

Sometimes a piece suffering the ravages of time must undergo a long difficult process of re-shaping. "An archeologist's greatest thrill is finding a piece of pottery or other implement intact. My feelings run just the opposite when I'm exploring for stoves," explains Beach. "A single leg or a piece of trim offers me the greatest challenge. I've sometimes come across complete stoves in what appears to be abandoned shacks. They don't interest me, and I've never taken one under those circumstances. There are enough half-buried parts in this area to keep me busy the rest of my life!"

"It would be disastrous to allow these artifacts to deteriorate," continues

*continued on page 51*

# CARE AND FEEDING
## . . . OF YOUR WOOD STOVE

You have a new wood stove. You plan to save on fuel bills, enjoy a toasty warm house in spite of winter's chill, even turn your back on this wonderful appliance occasionally to thaw out a few places your wall register could never reach. Here are are some tips to make it all work out just the way you planned.

*Be certain your stove is properly installed, from hearth to chimney cap.

*Collecting your own wood is excellent exercise, but if you opt to purchase wood, do so in the spring or early summer, when prices are lower. Learn the terms. "Cordwood" is the general term for 4-foot lengths. If you purchase wood this way, you may have to cut lengths yourself to fit your stove. A "full" cord of wood measures 4 feet by 8 feet by *4 feet deep.* A "face cord" is also 4 feet by 8 feet, but depth can be only 12 or 16 inches. Be aware of which type of cord you are paying for. Because it's virtually impossible to tell if you have received a full cord of wood, as it's dumped unceremoniously onto your driveway, here's a rough but simple way to estimate: a typical cord of "air-dry" wood weighs *at least* one and a half tons; green wood can weigh as much as 5 tons. If your "full-cord" order arrives at your doorstep in a half-ton pickup, guess what?

*Photo by Gary Smith*

*Stacking wood is a splendid family activity. Even the tiniest toddler can help with the kindling. A neatly-stacked woodpile is not only a source of personal satisfaction, it's essential for adequate air circulation to promote fast and complete drying. And don't forget to provide protection against rain and snow — dry wood absorbs water at an alarming rate!

*To get started, place a few single sheets of crumpled newspaper at the bottom of the firebox, top with a dozen or so pieces of dry kindling, then a couple of small logs. Open the draft all the way, light the newspaper, then close the loading door. When that wood begins to break up, add a *moderate* amount of wood, and when it catches fire, turn down the heat setting. If you've begun with a good hot bed of coals, and use seasoned wood, it shouldn't be necessary to check on the fire more than every four to six hours.

Every stove is an individual, and you'll have to learn by experimenting exactly what proportion of wood and air keeps yours happy. It could take a couple of weeks, so don't get discouraged. Read the manufacturer's directions carefully; they are *not* included with your stove as a source of kindling. Proper operation will keep your "smoke" pollution to a minimum.

*Empty *cold* ashes into a metal or ceramic container, cover, and store away from all flammables. (No, the front porch is not OK.) Wood ashes are high in potassium, and make an excellent fertilizer, especially for acid soil. Dig them around the roots of tomato plants to discourage cutworms. "Clean" wood ashes can be used to make your own soap, if you find yourself caught up in the self-sufficiency you will feel with your woodstove.

A woodstove is a return to an earlier time, a refreshing change in these days of electronic marvels and a houseful of appliances from automatic popcorn popper to self-cleaning oven. And as a "person-powered" machine, it *will* require you to make an adjustment. A wood stove is "alive," and if something does go wrong, you can't simply pull the plug. Common sense, a good familiarity with wood stove operation, and adherence to a few simple rules will insure a safe and rewarding relationship.

†Check the chimney and stovepipe regularly for creosote accumulation. A clean stovepipe answers "ping" to a tap; a dirty one responds with a dull "plonk." An annual professional cleaning is recommended.

†Don't burn railroad ties, particle board, compressed wood or siding material, wax or plastic-coated cardboard, liquid fuel products, large bunches of paper or green wood, or garbage. Those chemical logs that give off colors as they burn are nice in the fireplace, but unsuitable for a wood stove.

†Learn how to regulate your stove properly for overnight burning through the manufacturer's instructions or your wood stove dealer. Don't load a large amount of wood onto hot coals then immediately turn the air control very low. This can cause smoke to be pulled back into the room through any portion of the stove that's not tightly sealed, or in an extreme case, create enough pressure to blow open the door.

†Keeping a kettle or can of water on top of your stove will help keep the air moister. But be sure it's out of reach of small children, especially if it doubles as a baby bottle

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**Care and Feeding** *continued*

warmer. Small children should never be left unsupervised near a wood stove. In addition to accidental contact burns, there's a danger they may try to "play house — help load the wood."

One of those expandable child-proof gates is slightly inconvenient, but great for peace of mind; for an older child's birthday party, or any occasion when rough-housing may occur, it's a must.

†Just as you wouldn't go to bed or out for the evening and leave your kitchen range burners set on High, remember to turn down your woodstove when you won't be around to monitor it.

†If you keep your wood stove on a low setting most of the time, try to run it full blast for about 30 minutes each day. This will help keep creosote buildup to a minimum.

†Every home should have a fire extinguisher, wood stove or not. It is most efficiently located between the stove and the nearest exit. A smoke detector will generally not be "confused" by the occasional extra puffs of smoke your wood stove emits as you stoke or reload.

Most wood stove owners will tell you they enjoy their stove mostly because of lowered utility bills. Scratch the surface of a devoted stoveowner, however, and you'll find many more reasons. Although you can't see the cheery flames in today's modern-design stoves, there still develops a personal attachment to this heating source you will never experience with your basement furnace.

In city or country, the physical sensations of handling the wood, and the smells associated with a cozy campfire bring you closer to your place on the earth, and a satisfaction of tangibly providing basic necessities for yourself and your loved ones. ■

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*Wood-gathering season within the Inyo National Forest is from approximately May 1 through November 15, depending on weather conditions. Necessary permits and informative booklets are available through the Forest Service at: Mt. Whitney Ranger Station, Lone Pine; White Mountain Ranger Station, Bishop; Mammoth Ranger Station, Mammoth Lakes; and Lee Vining Ranger Station, Tioga Pass Road.*

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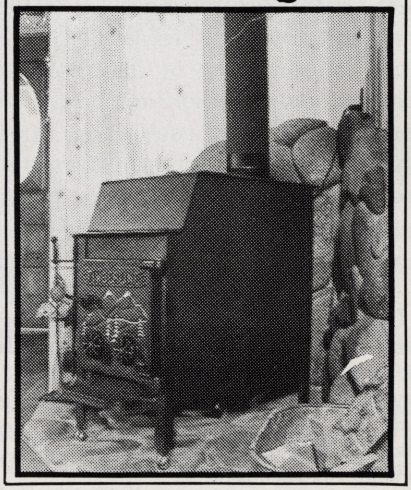

# OWENS RIVER

Text & photos by Thaddeus W. Taylor, III

The Owens River in Inyo County provides some great fishing on those winter days when the weather is good enough that you should probably be doing something else, like putting away the Christmas lights, washing the car, and so on. When you have the opportunity to try your skills on the Owens, you'll find the *fishing* to be excellent, but it's the *catching* that can be iffy. What makes the fishing great are the scenery, wildlife, and a notable absence of bugs that bite.

If you view fishing and catching as the same thing, you are going to miss out both ways. The only way that you can be absolutely sure of catching a trout involves equipment and techniques considered illegal in California, as well as the civilized world. We're talking about hand grenades and long-handled nets for a 100% sure chance of adding protein to your diet. This method is, as mentioned, illegal and sure to make you a big hit with the Fish and Game folks.

Now then, let's discuss the practical application of winter angling on the Owens River.

There are two types of trout to be found in the river, those that arrived by truck, and those that did not. The California Department of Fish and Game (DFG) parts with some of their pets several times a month and puts them in the Owens from Five Bridges Road on Highway 6, just north of Bishop, down to Big Pine. Under the care of DFG, these rather tame Rainbow and occasionally Brown trout are removed from their finny friends and family, as well as from their steady diet of Purina Trout Chow. It would seem then that this stuff would be the hot item, bait-wise. Legal or not, however, it's impossible to get on a hook.

How then does one catch these corn-fed critters? Lures, bait and luck. The lures that seem to work the best on the "truck trout" are rooster tails in white and brown, Mepps No. 10s in silver, and "super dupers." With a wild trout, lures work best coming from upstream working downstream to the fish. With truck trout, the jury is still out. No one seems to know what motivates them.

Bait comes either dead or live. Dead

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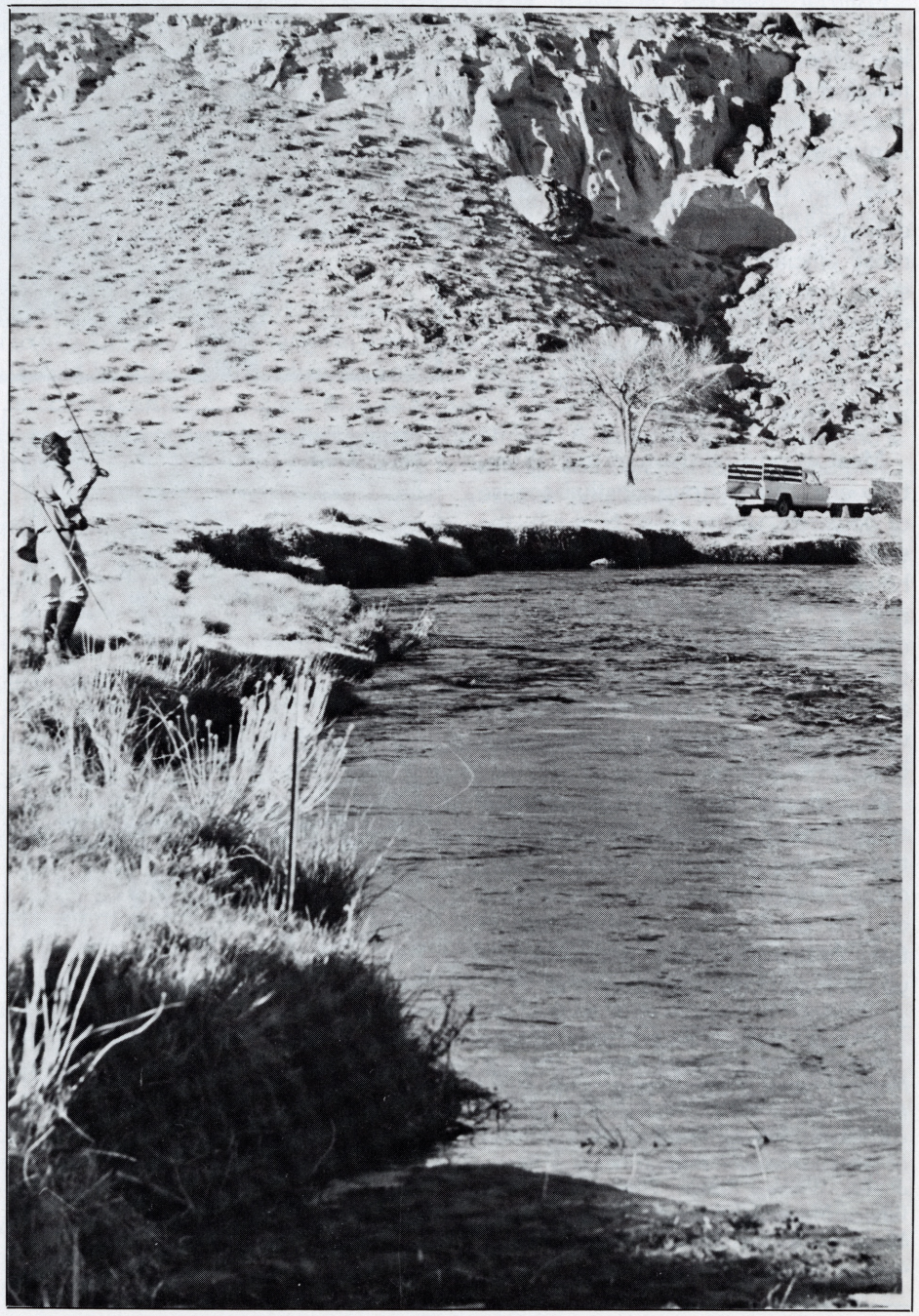


*The Owens River is open year-round for fishing from south of the Crowley Lake Dam. No tributaries are open. Be sure to get a copy of the current regulations from the Department of Fish and Game if you are unfamiliar with the area. Also, all fishing licenses are renewable on January 1 of each year.*

**Owens River** *continued*

bait includes, but is not limited to, marshmallows (fuschia has finally passed hot pink as the Eastern Sierra numero uno), and salmon eggs, still the favorite packaged bait. Salmon, not native to the Owens River, have eggs that are irresistable to trout, according to those who stock them. So like Velveeta cheese, we classify eggs as packaged even though they are organic, sort of.

For the really slimy organic "earthy" sort of bait, there are crickets, worms and the evergreen of the bait business, night crawlers. These come in white styrofoam cup-like containers, which make the bankside look like the remains of a Civil Service coffee break. The winter provides those of us who are environmental nit-pickers fewer nits to pick. Litter people don't like the cooler weather, it would seem.

These "live" baits are dropped by the angler into areas of slow water and may work as well on truck trout as native fish.

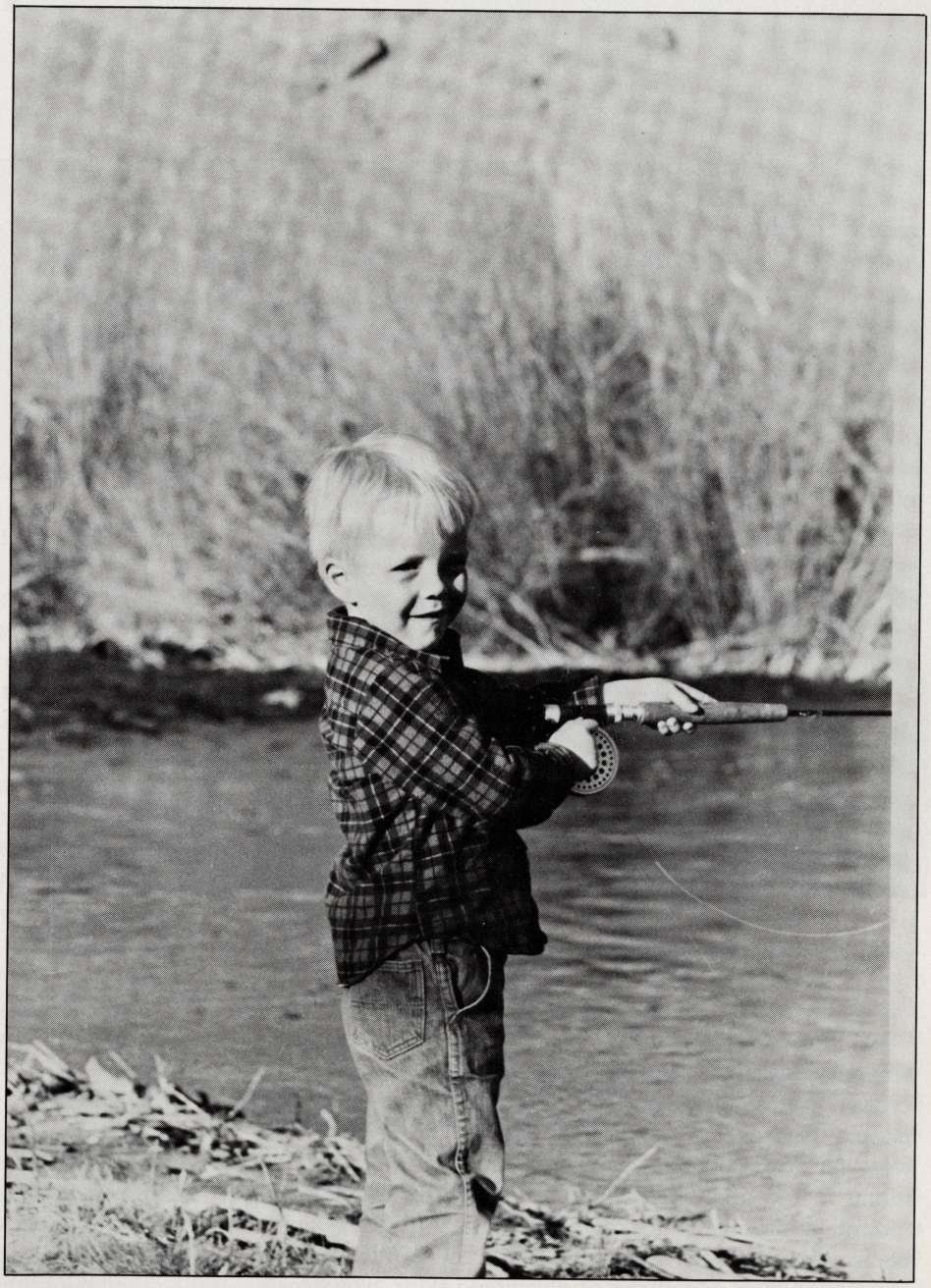
Those who try to gain face by catching wild native trout in the river, at their home between Pleasant Valley Dam and Five Bridges Road, lose that face and more when they resort to crickets and worms. Cricket afficionados have generally better-smelling hands than the worm and crawler fans. Also they tend to catch fish. My personal preference is to lean away from the "junk and gunk" (lures and bait) and towards fly fishing, in deference to the aesthetics of the environment and the sport of the catch.

Those who approach the river, long rod in hand, should note that surface hatches are few. When there is a surface hatch, the insects are very small. Thus the dry flies, if used, are to be tiny. Sizes 20 to 26, known as dammits due to the difficulty involved in keeping track of them, are the best sizes to use. Watch for a rising fish, rare in winter due to the lower activity brought on by colder weather. Generally, surface feeding is about as rare as punk rockers in Sun City.

Under the surface, wet flies, in sizes 16 to 20, called nymphs, can be productive. Old Man River himself recommends flies in olive green, white, black and tasty tan as a good selection. But all experts interviewed agreed that presentation is the key. The fly is to look as much like a natural meal as possible, and the angler is advised to sneak up to the banks. Remember, if the fish hears you stomping around the bank it is not likely to bite. The native Browns have adapted to their environment over many generations and are, as fish go, pretty smart. Their most highly developed sense is hearing. To the trout, like the opponents of the 101st Airborne, death comes from above. Old Mr. Trout is usually going to be more careful than hungry.

But most of all, remember, it's where you are, a beautiful place with solitude surrounding you, that makes the event. Not killing a fish. It's a no-lose proposition. Enjoy. □

*Mr. Taylor is a Bishop resident, avid fisherman ("remind them that avid doesn't necessarily mean good"), and the local representative for* California Trout, Inc. *His piscatorial pursuits are interrupted by his work as a stockbroker.*



*There's no age limit on the thrill of fishing the Owens River, winter, summer, spring or fall. Smaller crowds at the banks and fewer mosquitoes provide a memorable experience for the author's son, Daniel. This picture was posed; for safety reasons, Master Taylor wears a life vest for his more serious pursuits of the elusive trout.*

# SNOW CAMPING

*Text and photos by Hank Levine*

The Sierra Nevada is easily one of the most beautiful mountain ranges in the world. The close proximity to major urban areas, near perfect weather conditions, redwood forest, granite slabs, cliffs, deep valleys, waterfalls and lakes make them a popular hideaway for millions of visitors per year. Those who visit the Sierra during the summer months only, however, are missing the mountains when they are snow-covered, and in my opinion, at their very finest.

The thought of being outdoors during the winter, even for just half a day, either scares most people or brings back unpleasant memories of bone-chilling Midwestern winds or the icy rains of the Northeast. This type of thinking is unfortunate because it is during the winter that cold and snow combine to produce glittering snowfields, frozen waterfalls and increased contrast of the local topography.

Winter camping should not be feared, although respect is needed. You don't have to be cold and miserable everytime you are outdoors in the winter. There are many types of equipment and an equal number of techniques that can make winter travel fun. When snow camping, not only can you easily find the solitude that is lost in summer, but you can experience the beauty of snow-covered mountains that most people don't even know exist.

On your first winter experience, rent snowshoes, nordic (cross-country) skis or just use your backpacking boots and take a short stroll across a ridge top. Walking on top of packed snow works great, but chances are the snow won't be packed, causing you to punch through the top layer of crust into deep holes. Snowshoes and skis are a great alternative to wading through waist-deep snow, due to their larger surface area. Snowshoes are easier to learn how to use, they maneuver easily through thick forest and they climb up hills better than skis, although skis with climbing skins can ascend slopes of 35 degrees. Skis are faster on the flats and downhills and in general are more enjoyable to use than snowshoes. Whether using snowshoes or skis, nordic ski poles will help you with forward momentum, river crossings and getting up after a fall. Fifteen years ago few people used nordic skis in the United States; snowshoes were felt to be a safer, faster way to travel. This seemed funny to the Scandinavians, who had been using skis in mountainous terrain for many centuries. Today, winter backcountry travelers are finding that the combination of stiff boots, steel-edged skis and climbing skins allows for a more enjoyable trip than slower, clumsier snowshoes offer.

In the United States, backcountry travelers have traditionally used framed packs, which are great for carrying heavy and/or bulky loads, but tend to sway on your back while snowshoeing or skiing. This swaying can throw your sense of balance off enough to cause you to fall. Europeans have traditionally used frameless packs which are not as comfortable, but tend to be more stable for winter travel or climbing. Although framed packs are still more popular for trail hiking, recent design improvements have made internal frame rucksacks extremely comfortable and practical for skiing.

Winter night-time temperatures in the Sierra Nevada can be cold, dipping below minus ten degrees Fahrenheit. Spending a long winter night in a bag that doesn't keep you warm enough can be so depressing that you won't want to go snow camping again. Save your summer sleeping bag for warmer times. With proper modifications, the capabilities of a three-season bag can easily be extended. A gore-tex (breathable, waterproof nylon) sleeping bag cover or bivouac sack will keep you ten degrees warmer. A second light sleeping bag can add 15 degrees warmth, and a vapor barrier liner will add 15-20 degrees for only six ounces of additional weight.

If you expect *extreme* cold conditions, try a synthetic overbag, gore-tex covered down sleeping bag, and a vapor barrier liner. The two important things to remember are that you want to be warm at night, and you want your gear to stay dry. Wet gear is uncomfortable and inefficient for insulation. It is always important to have adequate insulation between the snow and your sleeping bag. Most people use the half-inch closed-celled foam instead of air mattresses, which tend to leak, or open-celled foam pads, which absorb water.

Tents should be lightweight, roomy enough to stay in for a few days at a time, strong enough to withstand high winds, and shaped so that snow cannot build up on the roof. Staying in a tent can be difficult during storms with high winds, because you never know if the tent will be ripped to shreds by the next blast of air. Leave the summer tent at home.

By carrying a snow saw and shovel, there are two good alternatives to staying in a tent — igloos and snow caves. Both of these structures are better in high winds and continuous snowfall, and they both maintain a constant temperature of around 28 degrees Fahrenheit. There are two drawbacks to sleeping and living in a snowcave or igloo — they take more time to build than a tent takes to set up, and it is a little harder to keep your gear dry. It's a good idea to go out on a day trip to practice igloo and snowcave building.

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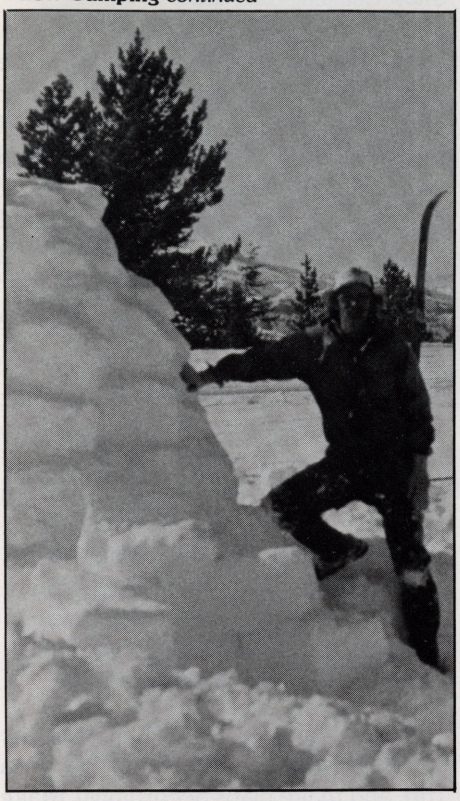
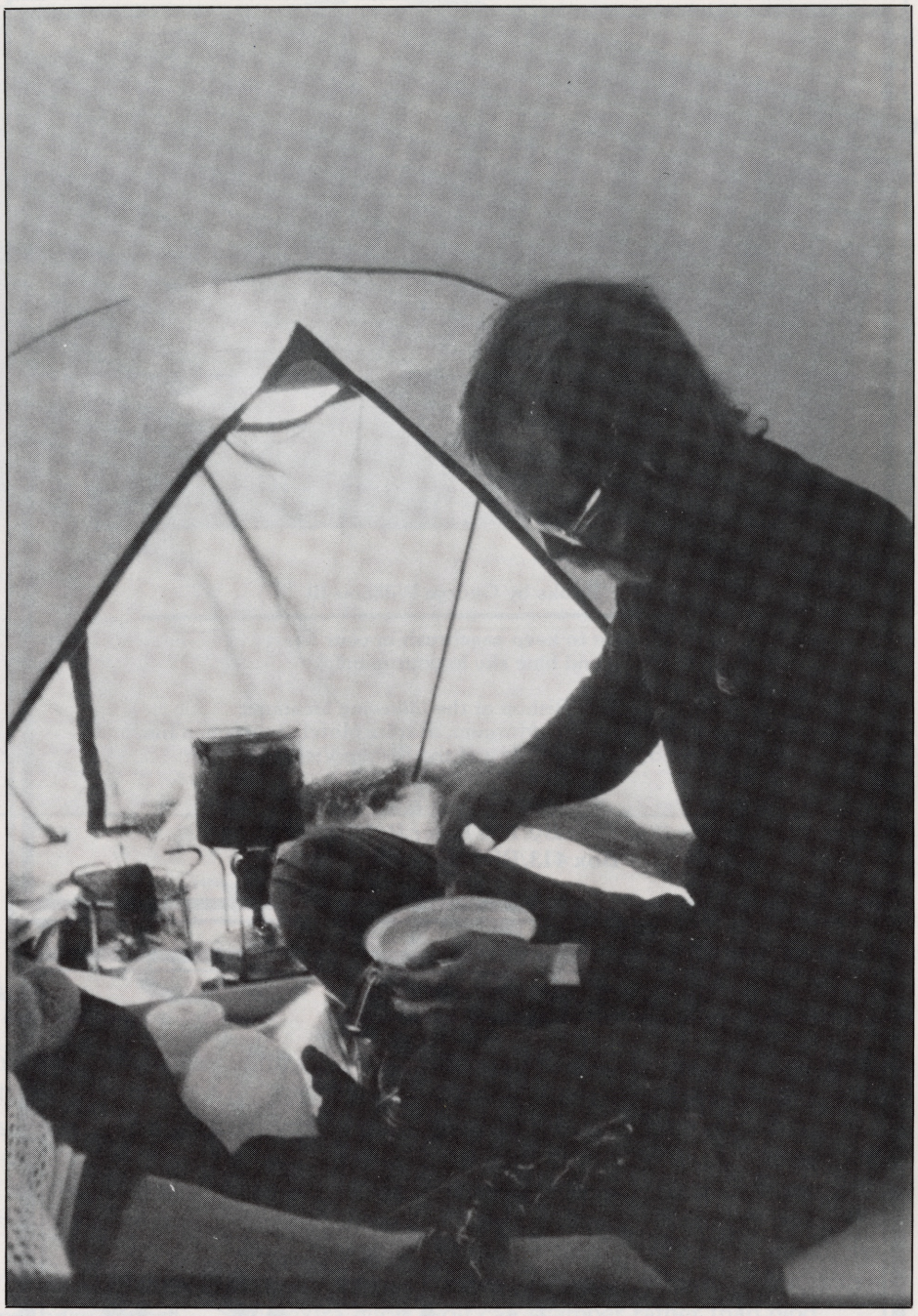


As important as not getting cold during the day is not getting too hot. A comfortable equilibrium can be maintained by layering your clothes. Four light to medium layers will give you more versatility and keep you just as warm as two heavier layers. Overheating can result in excessive sweating, which will dampen your clothes and make you cold during rest stops or with a change in the weather. Cotton should not be used, since it easily absorbs moisture. Wool absorbs 40 percent of its weight in moisture, and is therefore better than cotton, but still not your best choice.

Today's state of the art in clothing is pile, polypropylene and gore-tex fabrics. Pile jackets, pants, hats and mittens generally absorb only one percent moisture, are lightweight, extremely warm, machine washable and non-allergenic. Polypropylene, first used in disposable diapers for its wicking abilities, has all of pile's good qualities, absorbs less moisture, but is not quite as warm. Gore-tex overmitts, pants and jackets will keep the wind and moisture from penetrating to inner layers, yet it will allow body perspiration to escape.

Whether you are on snowshoes, skis, or just hiking, it is important to keep snow out of your boots. The best way to do this is to use gaiters, a nylon tube that hooks under your boot, covers the ankle and extends up your leg to near the knee.



To avoid dehydration, you should drink at least one gallon of liquid per day. It may be necessary to carry two stoves: one for cooking, one for melting snow for water. Camp and cooking fires cannot always be made, and if creeks are frozen, melted snow may be your only water source. The second stove will come in handy, too, in case the first stove breaks. Take lots of food with you, as it is easy to burn lots of calories hiking, skiing, snowshoeing and keeping warm.

If you are using a camera in the snow, there are several important factors to keep in mind. Many newer cameras and camera motor drives cannot operate without batteries, which loose energy when cold. If you find that your camera refuses to take pictures, try warming up the batteries. Lithium-celled batteries are less susceptible to cold than ordinary ones. Be careful when bringing your camera out of the cold into a warmer environment, as condensation may occur on the film and lens. All light meters average the tones in their field of vision to correspond with 18 percent gray. If you take a picture of a snowy

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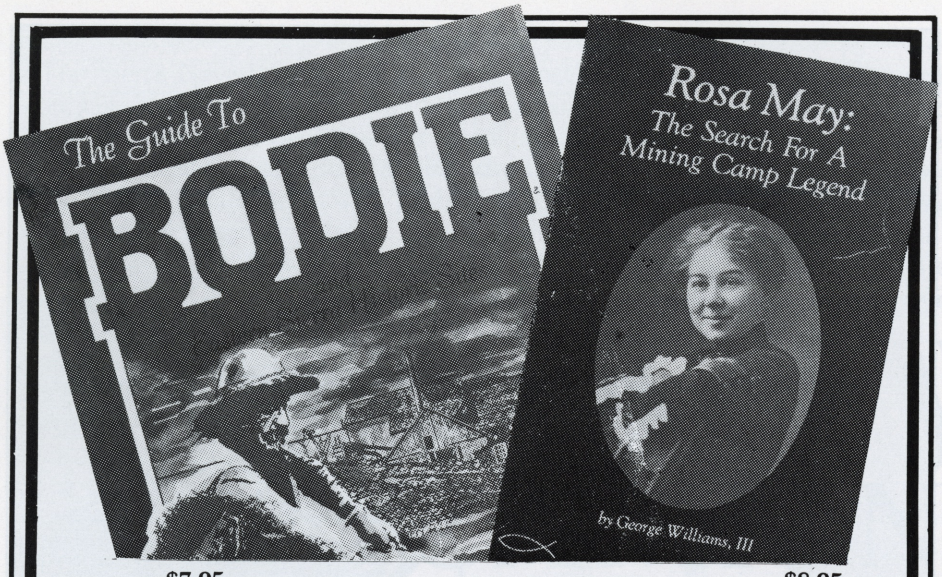


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**Snow Camping** *continued*

meadow, for example, although the average tone is white, your light meter reads the snow as 18 percent gray. If you trust your light meter, the final picture will have gray snow. To correct this problem, lower the shutter speed or open up your F-stop, thus exposing the film to more light. As in all outdoor photography, protect your camera from moisture.

There are many ways to safely start winter camping. If you have friends who are experienced winter campers, try joining them on their easier trips. An alternative is to go to a cross-country ski school that features overnight trips, a most informative way to learn. There are many beginner areas in Sequoia and Yosemite National Parks, Lake Tahoe, Mammoth Lakes, and near Bishop.

A few words of caution. Check the weather forecast before you go on a trip, and make plans accordingly. Make sure that friends, relatives or a government agency knows when and where you are going. Remember that the weather in the mountains can change suddenly. This doesn't mean you should leave at the first sign of a cloud or wind, but do be prepared. Skiing or snowshoeing in fresh snow is a wonderful experience. Remember the need to stay dry, drink lots of liquids, and carry extra stove fuel and food, so you can sit out a storm if necessary.

You don't have to spend a lot of money on equipment before your first winter trip. Dig out your old clothes or rummage through thrift shops. After you have taken a few winter trips and decide that the mountains really are more beautiful with snow on them, start buying winter equipment. Until then, snowshoes, skis, tents, stoves and sleeping bags can be rented from backpacking and mountaineering shops.

All it takes is a trip across a sweeping ridge with a view of an awesome row of pinnacles above a base of clean, white snow or a trip into a snow-filled meadow where the crystals are sparkling brilliantly, to appreciate the beauty of the Sierra Nevada in winter. □

# Cross Country

Cross-country skiing, as travel or sport, has been a part of the Sierra winter since it was introduced to this country. It was the cross-country skier who brought supplies and mail to snow-bound mining towns in the mid-1800's. And the sport undoubtedly spared the lives and sanity of many prospectors who might have otherwise succumbed to 'cabin fever.'

The Sierra offers thousands of acres of untracked snow and a wide variety of trails and terrain for today's cross-country enthusiasts. It's a sport enjoyed by virtually every age, and schools are located throughout the area, with classes for beginners to those who want to explore the newest advanced techniques.

CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING, Second Edition, by Ned Gillette and John Dostal, has recently been published. We found it informative and a pleasure to read, helpful to novices and experts alike. Lots of excellent photographs clarified even the most intricate maneuvers.

But when it came time to write the review, everyone on our staff who read the book decided instead to head for the slopes. So *SIERRA LIFE* is pleased to present excerpts:

"We've heard many observers of cross-country (particularly those of an alpine persuasion) say it is a monotonous, dull plodding sport. If you do ski walking only, it may be. But once you get the feeling of momentum carrying you down the trail, of being up and over your skis, of gentle and secure forward speed, it is a totally new sport with a subtle, gravity-defying fluidity: the more speed, the greater sense of release - even true on uphills where, with a little extra effort, you can scamper rather than plod.

"The diagonal stride is really cross-country skiing's emblem: a skier stretched out on the flat, gliding in easy alliance with gravity...

"Some skiers stay resolutely upright, never getting beyond a ponderous shuffle, never getting that glide. How to get it? Change your posture. Slump to begin to stride. In short, more gorilla for more glide...

"Listen to a seven-year-old explaining things to an obvious first timer: "See, all you have to do is put a little pressure on your skis as you go forward." Here in one short

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*Excerpts and photographs from CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING, Second Edition, by Ned Gillette and John Dostal, courtesy of The Mountaineers Books. The book may be obtained or ordered through most bookstores, or purchased directly from The Mountaineers Books, 715 Pike Street, Seattle, WA 98101 by sending $8.95 prepaid.*

sentence of simplicity and sophistication is the essence of diagonal striding.

"You need make only a few adjustments to your flat-track technique and have a willingness to raise your pulse rate a little to ski straight up most hills. Get a feeling of where your weight is on your skis. Lean too far forward and your skis will slip because your center of gravity is in front of your feet; lean too far back and you will feel slow and awkward, as if you are sitting in a chair and pulling yourself up the slope.

"Try to be light on your feet and to feel the snow under your skis. Shorten your stride. . . Jog up the hills as if you didn't have skis on. . . Keep your hands fairly low and your poles angled back so you can push effectively. . .

"Instead of sidestepping straight up or down, traversing, or zigzagging, on a gradual slope is often an easier solution to a steep slope, especially when toting a heavy backpack. . .

"Tacking is a slightly higher-speed version of a traverse, combining straight uphill skiing, a slight herringbone, and plenty of edging. Diagonal-stride uphill at the steepest angle you can manage that will still allow you to move quickly. Change directions by taking an uphill step off to the other side.

"Downhill skiers are adding cross-country to their winter pleasures and cross-country skiers are riding the lifts with loose heels and heading for steep backcountry terrain on light equipment. . .

"A word to alpine skiers venturing out on skinny skis. Relative to alpine equipment, cross-country gear is unforgiving on downhills. The skis are lighter, narrower, more flexible, and may or may not have metal edges; boots are ordinarily more flexible, and heels lift freely off the skis. This means less control and stability than available on alpine equipment.

"To compensate for the light equipment, your weight must be right over the center of your skis or you'll be on your rear end. . . No longer can you "cheat" while turning and get away with it because of the stable holding power of alpine equipment. Downhill cross-country skiing will bring you back to basics. You'll learn a tremendous amount about balance, weight, steering, and edging which is directly applicable to alpine. . .

*First the pole plant, then the face plant.*

"To make a skate turn, keep your knees flexed and hands low for balance. You must edge your outside ski to give yourself a secure, nonslip platform from which to step. The critical ingredient is the weight shift from the outside ski to the inside ski. . . Most errors in making a good skate turn come from being caught in between with weight on both skis. There's simply no place for hesitation here. . .

"Turns downhill are actually easier when more than one is done, so that the ending of one turn sets you up for the next, establishing a rhythm and cadence that blends the individual ingredients of turning into one flowing motion. Once you learn the ABCs of doing a snowplow, skate, stem christie, parallel, or telemark turn, try to link several together. This is what skiing is really about: negotiating the slope as if all your turns were tied to each other. . .

"In pursuit of downhill competence, falling is inevitable. While it is much more likely to happen in the hills, it can,

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of course occur on the flats. . . Face it, as skiers we've all fallen and will fall again. With little choice in the matter, let us relax and not let it get in the way of our continuing efforts to be better or go faster on our skis.

"Not only will falling become less onerous, it may become downright addictive. You'll relish the chance for display and pay more attention to style. No longer satisfied with a simple sit down, you'll hope for something more flamboyant. Going for more speed will allow for a Flying Buttocks Arrest ("Parallel Bun Stop," for more advanced skiers). If the density of the snowpack is right, a Thundering Buttocks Arrest can be achieved.

"It is not uncommon to ride the lifts at a downhill resort these days and hear fellow riders calling out "Telemark!" to genuflecting rover packs of cross-country skiers charging down the slopes below. What they're asking for is a turn that's been around ever since skis were twelve feet long and attached to the shoes with thongs. Unlike other turns, in which feet are kept side by side, in the telemark a skier scissors the legs fore and aft, steering around on what is essentially one long ski. It's a graceful, flamboyant turn, the mark of the all-around cross-country stylist, and the only one you can't also do with alpine skis. . .

"A telemark is useful as well as fun; use it when you need fore and aft stability. In deep powder? Drop into a telemark, essentially putting yourself in one long ski for power steering par excellence. Frozen in a vice-like grip with your parallel stance in dense crud snow? Initiate a telemark with a step or two, or even a jump. It's quick. So too in tight trees. Even moguls. It's stable. No wonder ski jumpers land in a telemark position. If you're carrying a backpack, a smooth telly will not throw you down. It's a tolerant turn, this double-clutch shuffle, custom tailored for cross-country equipment.

"Skiing smoothly over varied terrain is one of cross-country's really sensual pleasures, a way of getting clear of gravity and using it to your advantage. It's instinctive skiing on the trail that we all strive for: a combination of technique, strength, and mental attitude. It comes only with experience.

*On steep traverses, resist the urge to lean into the hill.*

"A moderately rolling downhill section well endowed with bumps gives an amusement park air to cross-country skiing. . . Use independent leg action as an auto uses independent shock absorbers to smooth out the ride on a rough road, allowing you to make tiny adjustments to keep your skis on the snow.

"Bumps can be a natural aid to turning. Use the top of the bump as a pivot point around which to swivel your skis, sliding off the backside. Finally, if you don't soak up the bump, it will send you into the air, a condition often sought by more experienced and playful skiers who have checked the warranty on their skis. While you are airborne, you'll want to remain relaxed and keep your weight over your skis, lowering your legs for landing and to absorb the shock of impact.

"Just because you are at the top of an intimidatingly steep slope or headwall, don't lose your cool. Even as a novice you already have all the technical moves necessary to descend fairly steep slopes. The width of the pitch will determine what you can get away with. Wide-open western slopes lend themselves to long traverses linked by kick turns or sidestepping. Take the slow and easy approach by seeking out the path of least resistance and utilizing these familiar techniques.

"Whether you are turning or traversing on steep terrain, it is vital to lean out from the hill so your weight is over your feet while you drive your knees into the hill so your ski edges will grip. . .

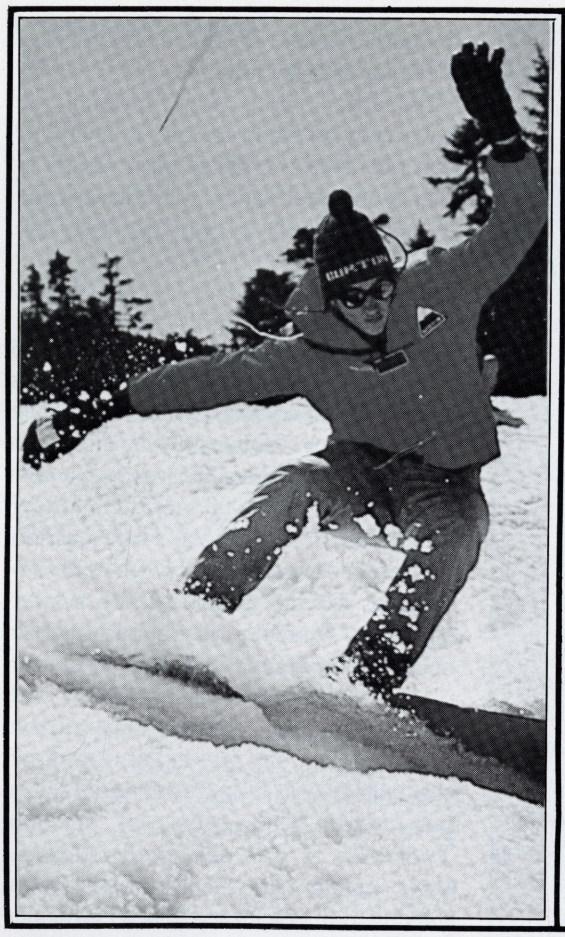
"Yosemite Lesson —

"On a trip that seems like it happened a century ago, Ned Gillette and his friend Jeff decided to ski the twenty-five miles from Yosemite Valley to Tuolumne Meadows in one day, a gain of 5,000 feet (to 9,000 feet) with lots of undulation in between. They carried moderately heavy packs, planning to stay for a week and do some winter climbing. Starting at daybreak they sped up the steep 3,000-foot climb out of the valley, full of enthusiasm and energy. Donna joined them at the Snowcreek cabin, located at the top of the valley wall. They continued on in fine shape, the goal of making Tuolumne in one day fixed rigidly in their minds. The trail-breaking was difficult but not impossible in typically heavy Sierra snow.

"Several miles farther on, at Tenaya Lake, they discovered that they possessed only one quart of water for all of them! (This was their first clue that they should have altered their plans, but it was overlooked in their novice enthusiasm.) They continued on with the sweaty work, now without water, becoming acutely dehydrated. As the sun hit the horizon, they were only about four miles short of their destination. A brief discussion was held about stopping and bivouacking, but with no tent and with the lure of a warm and snug cabin beckoning, they set off again along the unplowed road, just able to find their way as darkness settled at 5:30 p.m.

"Ned felt a bit dizzy and fuzzy-headed as they pressed on, now committed to their personal marathon. The snow continued to be difficult to plow through, and their pace slowed. They had overestimated their remaining strength. The final few miles seemed to take forever. At 9 p.m.— sixteen hours after starting — they arrived at Tuolumne, staggering along

*continued on next page . . .*



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**Cross-Country** *continued*

like mechanical toys at a snail's pace, lurching onto their poles for balance. They were dog-tired, in the initial stages of hypothermia, and desperately in need of water. Stopping at a bridge where the road crossed the river, they could hear water gurgling. Ned took off his skis, grabbed his ice axe, and crawled under the bridge onto the clean ice. Like a madman he beat and hammered the ice in an attempt to break through to the water. Sparks flew, but he was too far gone to heed their message, and it was not until later that he realized that he had been hitting rocks.

"Then, as if he'd been shocked by a bolt of lightning, he was alert and in command again. Jeff had just announced that he couldn't feel his toes, and hadn't for a couple of hours. Ned was up on the road, into his skis, and charging across the meadow toward the Park Service cabin. It was locked. Where would they hide a key? Unusually clever, they located it within five minutes, burst in, started the stove, heated water to drink and, alas, to thaw out Jeff's toes, which were waxy white and hard as wood.

"Lukewarm water at 108 degrees Fahrenheit, accompanied by bite-the-bullet pain, brought the feet back to life, but it was obvious that Jeff was a stretcher case, since feet, once thawed, will suffer tissue damage if walked on. (If self-evacuation is absolutely necessary for a limited distance, do it on still-frozen feet.) A rescue was carried out by the Park Service the following day.

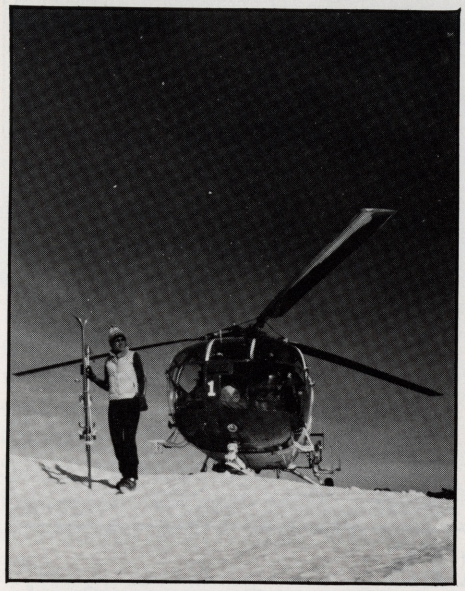
"Through inexperience, the group never foresaw the repercussions of their risky enterprise and didn't take precautionary steps until the situation was critical (although after realizing they were really in trouble, they did take cool and resolute steps).

"You will never eliminate risk. The key in wilderness travel is to precisely calculate your risk. The probability and likely proportions of an accident are thus reduced." □

*We hope you've enjoyed these excerpts from* CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING. *Also included are citizens' racing, adventure skiing, suggestions about equipment and waxing, and cross-country for kids. Happy trails!*

# SPECIAL ACTIVITIES

## HELI—SKIING



Combining two distinct forms of excitement is the relatively new sport of heli-skiing. No more waits in long lift lines, no more competing with hordes of kamikaze hot-doggers; just you and a few friends, airlifted by jet helicopter to virgin slopes and the deepest powder.

Imagine the thrill of smoothly cruising over the Sierra, enjoying the incomparable view from the plexiglass bubble that is your helicopter. Then, imagine that you and your companions are the first, the very first, people on Earth to ski down this particular run. That's just what heli-skiing feels like.

Interested? From January through May 15, wind and weather permitting, Mammoth Heli-Ski offers all-day packages, with a guarantee of at least five runs totaling 12,000 to 15,000 vertical feet, for $225 per person. That also includes a gourmet picnic lunch.

Also available on specific days are two-run specials for $75 per person, and scenic helicopter tours of the Eastern Sierra for those who'd rather watch than ski.

Mammoth Heli-Ski provides access to runs in the Mammoth area, and up to the crest of the Sierra all the way to Bridgeport. Call them at (619) 934-4494.

## SNOWBOARDING

Snowboarding is the sport of surfing down a hill on a small-scale surfboard designed for use in the snow. This relatively young sport, invented in the mid-1960s, is growing in popularity.

While the sport is usually interpreted as an offshoot of skiing, its roots and characteristics are quite dissimilar. Unlike skiing, snowboarding involves a surf-type technique common to windsurfing, skateboarding, and wave surfing. This technique utilizes a sideways stance on the board with either the left or right foot forward; the turning motion requires that the rider lean with all of the body into the turn, unlike skiing where the skier's upper body is kept erect while turning.

The only piece of equipment needed to enjoy the sport is a snowboard, and as little as three inches of snow. Rubber waterski-type bindings, permitting easy release and virtually eliminating the types of leg injuries associated with skiing, can be attached to almost any kind of shoe, from hightop sneakers to snowmobile boots.

The Sierra is filled with places to snowboard, from backyard to backcountry. The area around Bishop Creek is a favorite for local enthusiasts.

Local ski areas, such as Mammoth Mountain and June Mountain, do not permit snowboarding on the slopes, for obvious safety precautions where Alpine skiers are present. Most of the ski resorts can recommend good snowboarding areas, and some have set aside special slopes. Competitions are already springing up across the country for this new and exhilarating winter sport.

## SNOWMOBILING

Snowmobiling combines the thrills of motorcycle riding with the beauty of ski touring! Commercial rentals are available in some places throughout the Sierra; make inquiries at your favorite ski area or check the telephone directory. Certain areas, especially designated wilderness areas, are closed to motorized vehicles, so be sure to check before you go. In remote areas, it's best to take two machines and snowshoes, just in case — snowmobiles can carry you deep into the woods in a short period of time, but the walk out takes a lot longer!

## ICE SKATING

Ice skating in the Eastern Sierra — great fun and attractive because, like skiing, it offers good outdoor recreation in a picturesque setting. People whose only skating experience has been in indoor rinks often aren't aware of the healthful benefits of skating freely in a beautiful mountain setting. Many of those who take advantage of local resources become dedicated enthusiasts.

There are many local lakes, ponds and reservoirs which offer excellent ice skating at various times during the fall and winter, most notably those in the Bishop Creek and Mammoth Lakes areas. The most consistently good locations are Intake 2 Reservoir and North Lake in the Bishop area, and Lake Mary and the Whitmore Alkali Ponds in the Mammoth area.

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With over 20 square miles of ski terrain, Heavenly offers nine mountain peaks, 26 lifts, runs up to several miles long, and an unparalleled 3600-foot vertical drop. Heavenly's wide-open bowls, well-groomed slopes, and powdered timber areas are skiable from mid-November to mid-May. A full 50% of the mountain is designed for the intermediate skier, 25% to challenge the advanced and 25% to encourage the beginner.

The internationally-recognized Ski School is staffed with 100 professional instructors (many bi-lingual) utilizing the Natural Easy Curve (NEC) method.

Ski packages are available through *Heavenly Central Reservations,* and include lodging, lift tickets, ski shuttle bus coupons, and more. They can also book advance reservations for ski lessons, rental equipment, helicopter skiing, and rental cars.

*For reservations and information contact Heavenly Central Reservations, PO Box 2180, Stateline, NV 89449, or call (702) 588-4584.*

## JUNE MOUNTAIN

Just north of Mammoth Lakes is June Mountain, a different kind of ski resort. While Mammoth is geared towards handling vast numbers of ski enthusiasts, June Mountain prefers to keep the crowds down below the 3,000 mark. Since there are more than 20 miles of groomed downhill slopes, runs tend to be uncrowded, even on weekends.

Rated as one of the West's steepest runs, "The Face of June" provides a challenge for the most expert of skiers, with a vertical drop of 1,045 feet. Thirty percent of the resort's runs are designated as beginner, with 45% considered intermediate, and 20% rated as expert.

Skiing at June Mountain mid-week is like owning your own resort; there are usually less than five skiers on each run! Additionally, June Mountain offers mid-week discount rates, making Mammoth's northern neighbor an appealing destination.

*Phone: (619) 648-7733.*

## MAMMOTH MOUNTAIN

Mammoth has experienced good snowfall with depth at the Main Lodge at 113 inches. Coverage is excellent, and the surface is packed powder.

With advanced and expert skiers in mind, Mammoth Mountain has built two new chairs. Chair 22 starts above Clover Leaf and ends at the top of Lincoln Mountain. This triple chair, 3750 feet long, 1450 vertical, offers skiers a 360-degree range from the top of Lincoln allowing them to ski to the Main Lodge, Chairs 4, 5 or 9, or back down the face to the Warming Hut II area. Chair 23 starts to the left of the top station on Chair 19 and ends on the ridge between the Drop Out and Wipe Out Chutes. Also a triple chair, it is 2629 feet long, 1105 feet vertical.

New this year is a Southern California 24-hour Snow Report phone, updated daily with current mountain information. Phone (213) 935-8866. Still in operation is the 24-hour Snow Report Phone in Mammoth at (619) 934-6166.

## NORTHSTAR-AT-TAHOE

Renowned as one of the best intermediate ski resorts in the West, Northstar-at-Tahoe gets physical and flexes its muscles for expert skiers this year. A new triple chair lift on the backside of Mount Pluto will open up some 400 acres of mostly advanced skiing terrain.

Offering a vertical drop of 1866 feet, Northstar's new Schaffer's Camp Lift has 10 feet more vertical than Squaw Valley's fabled KT-22. In fact, in terms of total vertical drop, this lift is the biggest chair lift in all the Sierra. It opens up the backside of 8600-foot high Mount Pluto, an area previously accessible only to those hearty skiers willing to hike out.

This year, four new runs were carved from the backside glades. This new area will offer great tree skiing on powder days.

*continued on page 65*

# HIGH SIERRA SLEIGH RIDES

Remember the days when horse-drawn sleighs traveled over country roads in wintertime? Those days are still here in Mammoth Lakes, California. Lou and Mary Roeser of the Sierra Meadows Ski Touring and Equestrian Center began offering recreational sleigh rides to the public in 1982.

Lou Roeser's eyes light up when he talks about the sleigh rides. "This has been a dream of mine for a long time. Back when I was a kid in Illinois, when my grandfather's and uncle's farms would become snowbound, horse-drawn sleighs were our only transportation. We used Belgian and Percheron horses, the same kind we use on the sleigh rides now."

Each sleigh is pulled by a pair of the three-quarter-ton beasts. Sierra Meadows acquired six of the massive creatures, to go with the seven they already had, plus two extra sleighs, before offering the rides to the public. The horses are truly impressive-looking, as they stand ready in front of the sleigh. Among the horses used is Blue, especially noteworthy because of his appearance in television commercials as well as the movies "Paint Your Wagon" and "The Call of the Wild."

The main lodge from which the sleighs arrive and depart is like a museum of cowboy paraphenalia. There are antique bits on the walls, and a handmade rawhide reata like the early cowboys used for roping. Elk and buffalo horns adorn the walls, as well as deer, bear and pronghorn antelope heads. Antique spurs and angora chaps hang by the stove, alongside a draft horse harness and old-time saddlebags. Paintings and drawings of and by the Roeser family are hung here and there, and on one wall is a large photo montage of the Roeser's twice-a-year, 100-mile horse drive.

The sleigh rides run in the afternoon and evening, and although the day rides are popular, the evening rides are perhaps a bit more romantic. Also, the evening rides include a home-cooked dinner and entertainment at the main lodge.

The drivers are likely to be Lou Roeser or his son Lee, and between them they have about sixty years of experience at handling livestock. In addition to the elder Roeser's familiarity with horses, he has had other sledding experience — he once raised and trained his own team of malamute sled dogs. "I did it for my own enjoyment, really," he says. "It's something to see, when the dogs are all harnessed and they're all yippin' and chompin' at the bit. When those dogs hit that harness and the sled takes off under you, it's quite a thrill."

The sleigh rides have become quite an attraction. It's easy to see how people feel about the rides from their happy, red-cheeked faces as they return from their tour. "This is so much fun, because it's something I've always heard about, but never had a chance to do," said one woman. A man in Mammoth on a ski vacation commented, "I love this. It's great to get out in the open air with the sleigh, the snow, and the mountains all around. It's really picturesque."

Lou Roeser agrees. "It's something that's magic," he says. "A lot of older people can recall riding sleighs in their childhood. A lot of other people have dreamt of it. We're happy to provide that experience." □

**Sierra Ski Resorts** *continued*

The Northstar Nordic Center has lengthened its trail system by another five kilometers, bringing its groomed and tracked cross-country trail totals to 30 kilometers.

*For information, call (916) 562-1010. For snow conditions, call (916) 562-1330 (24 hours).*

### SQUAW VALLEY, U.S.A.

Squaw Valley's season normally starts in mid-November and continues through the first week in May, with an average annual snowfall of 400 inches.

There are 26 lifts, including the Tram and the Gondola. Thirty percent of Squaw Valley's terrain is rated for beginners, forty percent for intermediates and thirty percent for advanced and expert skiers.

The Squaw Valley Ski School maintains a staff of approximately 100 instructors. Programs are offered for beginners, intermediates and advanced skiers. Specialized programs include Panda Skee, for beginning skiers ages 5 to 12; Advanced Ski Seminars and Womans Way Seminars.

*Snow Phone: (916) 583-6955.*

### YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

Badger Pass Ski Area, between 7200 and 8100 feet, is open daily for the season, which usually extends from Thanksgiving through mid-April. The ski area has six lifts and is home of the Yosemite Ski School, founded in 1928.

Cross-country skiers can enjoy more than 90 miles of well-marked trails. The Yosemite Mountaineering School offers lessons (beginning through expert), winter survival and snow camping seminars, and overnight trips to Glacier Point and Ostrander Lake, with longer trips to Mount Hoffman, Tuolumne Meadows, or across the Sierra.

*Snow Phone: (209) 372-4808*

The Yosemite Natural History Assn. is planning two winter ski treks for families this year, March 10-11 and 24-25. For families or single parents, and educationally directed toward youngsters 6 to 12 years, each day's tour involves a 5-mile round trip, with an evening program in the Valley. Cost is $30 per person; participants are expected to provide their own ski equipment. Contact the Yosemite Natural History Assn., PO Box 545, Yosemite, CA 95389 for further information. Phone is (209) 372-4532. □

# ICE CLIMBING

*The vertical and overhang upper wall of the North Palisades (bergschrund) is a challenging place to climb ice.*

Text and photos by Hank Levine

Not long ago, it was common to jump into an oak barrel and try the thrilling descent of Niagara Falls. After numerous jumps, practitioners of the sport came to the realization that death was a likely side-effect. The beauty of waterfalls still attracted thrillseekers, forcing them to invent a new variation.

Today's thrillseekers approach waterfalls from below, not above, and they wait until winter weather brings sub-freezing temperatures. This new breed call themselves ice climbers.

Nearly everyone has heard the thundering roar of a waterfall and seen the clean, white froth and rainbows it produces. Fewer people have been lucky enough to see a magnificent fall frozen into silence and stillness; even fewer have had the audacity to attempt climbing one of these frozen falls.

No one knows the origin of ice climbing, but it surely must have started in some deranged mind! Ice climbing has no great social status, it can be cold, miserable, scary and dangerous. Nothing could be more natural for people with a taste for the bizarre.

Ice climbing gear looks like it was invented by a mad scientist specifically for torture purposes. Warm, rigid mountaineering boots are fitted with crampons (a type of cleat with 12-18 sharp points) which can support a climber's weight when kicked into the ice. Ice axes and ice hammers, which feature either sharp-pointed or tubular blades, are used instead of handholds. Helmets are used to protect the fragile cranial area.

As in other forms of climbing, a protection system of ropes is used. The higher climber will periodically stop, chop a small hole with his or her ice hammer, and then drill a sharp tubular

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ice screw into the hole. Carabiners or snap links connect the screws to the rope, which in turn is connected to the other climber. The second climber removes the screws when he or she climbs by them.

It is common practice to take falls while rock climbing, as long as the rope is being properly used and there are no ledges to smash into. This is not the case with ice climbers, who have a saying, "You must not fall!" Falls have resulted in ice axes being driven into the skull, ice screws poked into the abdomen, and ankles broken. Lowe Products, a leading manufacturer of ice climbing gear, includes a warning on all of their products, *"Ice climbing is dangerous."*

There must be something to ice climbing, though. Maybe people are attracted by the beauty of sculptured ice columns, a challenge may be necessary for some people to find true happiness, the intense concentration required may relieve anxieties, or maybe some people (myself included) just like having the pants scared off them. Whatever the reasons, ice climbing is growing in popularity.

If you find that you have a tendency to jump out in front of moving trucks, speed down Main Street at 75 m.p.h., or attack Grizzlies with your bare hands, then maybe you should try ice climbing!

The dead of winter is here, and the waterfalls are frozen. Look in Yosemite Valley or small steep canyons near Lake Tahoe or on the eastern side of the Sierra Nevada, but *don't* venture off the ground unless you are with an experienced ice climber. The sport is dangerous enough if you know what you are doing. The additional handicap of climbing with another novice is not needed.

Recently, I climbed a very steep frozen waterfall near Yosemite. My calf muscles cramped from endlessly standing on the two front points of my crampons, I had frostnip on my nose and four fingers, I nearly had an eye poked out by ice fragments when my ice axe penetrated some especially brittle ice, and my helmet stopped a chunk of ice from invading my brain. When we got to the top of the fall, my partner and I looked at each other, grinned, and immediately set off to climb the frozen waterfall next to us.□

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# PINK SNOW

Text and photos by
Wayne P. Armstrong

Probably everyone who has hiked across an alpine meadow or traversed a steep talus slope in the Sierra Nevada has noticed pinkish patches, or streaks of red, on snowbanks. This is especially common during the summer months in areas where snow has lingered from winter storms.

Compressing the snow with your boot leaves a distinct footprint the color of watermelon pulp. The snow even has the smell of a fresh watermelon, and is sometimes called "watermelon snow." Walking in pink snow often results in a temporary discoloration of your clothing, such as bright red soles and pinkish pant cuffs. Despite the attractive name, it's best to avoid eating "watermelon snow," which can cause intestinal difficulties and diarrhea, a rather distressing situation above timberline.

For thousands of years the mysterious pink snow puzzled mountain climbers, explorers, and naturalists alike. Some people thought it was caused by mineral deposits or oxidation products leached from the rocks. Colored snow was mentioned in the writings of Aristotle, several centuries before the time of Christ. It was not until the end of the 19th century that the amazing phenomenon was finally attributed to high concentrations or "blooms" of microscopic algae.

In the high mountain ranges of the western United States at least 60 different species of snow algae have been identified, but only a few kinds have been reported from the Sierra Nevada. One of the most common species of snow algae in this area, and the one responsible for pink snow, is *Chlamydomonas nivalis*. This interesting little single-celled organism is a type of green algae that contains a bright red pigment in addition to chlorophyll. Unlike most species of freshwater algae, it is cryophilic (cold-loving) and thrives in freezing water. Its scientific name, *nivalis*, is from the Latin and refers to snow.

During late spring and summer, alpine snowbanks are often colored beautiful shades of red by a myriad of algal cells. It has been estimated that one teaspoon of melted snow may contain more than two million cells of snow algae. Compacting the snow increases the density of the red cells and heightens the color.

Sometimes the algae accumulate in shallow depressions in the snow called sun cups. Because the dark pigment of the algae absorbs heat, the cells melt their way into the snow, thus deepening the sun cups and accelerating the melting rate of snowbanks and glaciers.

Through a microscope, a drop of melted snow reveals literally thousands of brilliant red cells that look like rounded hard candies. The bright red carotenoid pigment inside the cells of snow algae is similar to that in tomatoes, red peppers, and in many colorful flowers and autumn leaves. The pigment presumably helps to protect the delicate cells from the intense solar radiation at the surface of the snow. Because of the thin layer of atmosphere for filtration, alpine snowbanks are subjected to more damaging ultraviolet radiation than at lower elevations.

There are several explanations for exactly what happens to the pink snow algae when they are covered by deep layers of snow during winter. Some experiments indicate that these algae lie dormant during the winter months under drifts of snow. The following spring, meltwater and nutrients reach the dormant cells and stimulate germination. Upon germination, the resting cells release smaller, green, swimming cells with whiplike flagella that propel them through the snow pack to the surface and daylight. Exactly what triggers this remarkable migration to

*continued on next page . . .*

(Above) Snowbanks of colorful pink snow at upper Gaylor Lakes. (Inset) Microscopic view of red cells of snow algae Chlamydomonas nivalis.

**Pink Snow** *continued*

the surface has been the subject of extensive research. It may be related to a combination of factors, such as melting snow and dissolved nutrients, light intensity, and possibly the length of daylight.

Once at the surface, the swimming cells loose their flagella and form thick-walled resting cells containing the protective red pigment. The nutrient source for snow algae comes from minerals leached from boulders and underlying soil, and from detrital material (especially pollen) that blows onto the snow from nearby trees. The powerful mountain winds that bring nutrients to the snowbank may also serve to disperse the dormant cells to distant snow-capped mountains.

There are many striking examples of colorful microscopic algae in our environment. Algal cells color the trunks of trees velvety green, and the trunks of Monterey cypress on the Monterey Peninsula a brilliant orange. The colorful crusted growth on rocks and boulders is caused by an intimate association, or "marriage," between algae and fungi known as lichen. In the Sierra Nevada and high desert ranges to the east, there are many colors of lichen, including black, red, orange, green, yellow, and chartreuse. A unicellular alga related to snow algae grows in salt lakes throughout the world and often colors the water pink. The gleaming red salt flats of Owens Lake are primarily caused by astronomical numbers of red salt-loving bacteria.

The cells of microscopic algae are able to survive in a variety of amazing places, from the dry salt crust and brine pools of blistering desert playas to boiling hot springs and windswept, lichen-covered peaks of high mountains. In the freezing water of alpine snowbanks, they live and multiply through countless centuries of time in a sea of fallen snow flakes, efficiently utilizing the sun's energy in a world that never gets above freezing. □

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*Wayne Armstrong is a member of the Life Science Dept. at Palomar College, San Marcos, CA, and is a frequent visitor to the Sierra, conducting alpine field trips.*

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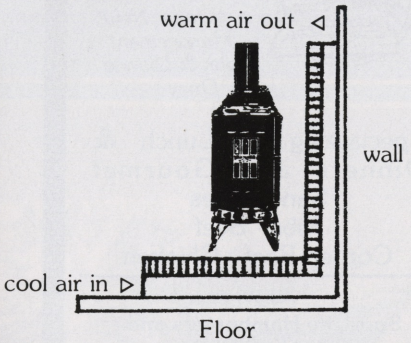


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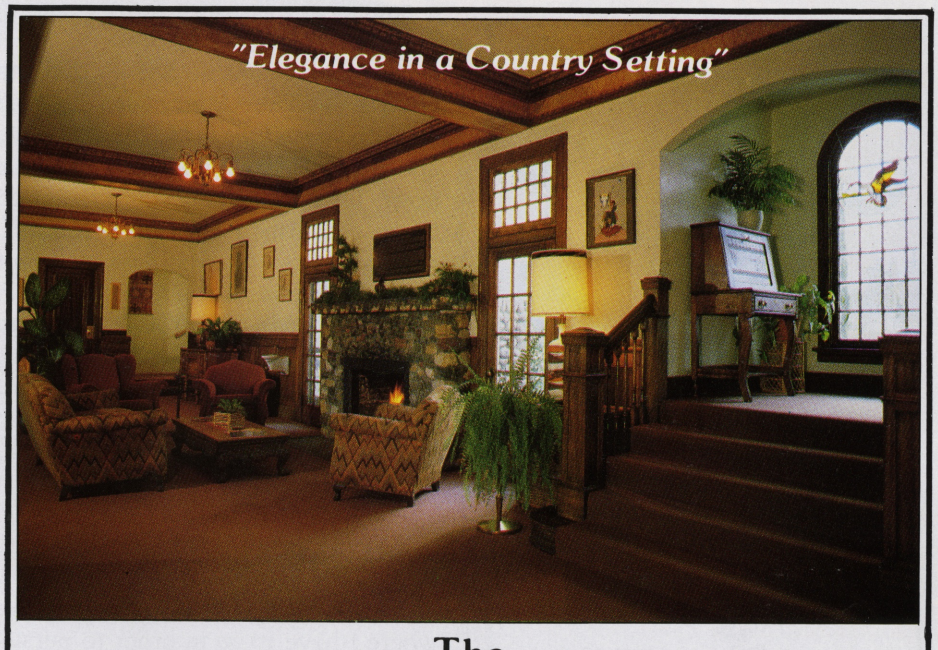


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**Forstenzer** *continued*

struck by the beauty and quiet of the mountains and the desert. He began to spend more and more of his time in the Eastern Sierra, hiking and fishing the mountain streams.

The Rocket 88 band split up in 1972, the result, Marty says, of conflicting egos and the hassles of being on the road. So he returned to Berkeley and graduated a year later with his B.A. in Political Science.

"I'd quit playing music for a year, while I worked on my degree. When I graduated, I knew that I wanted to live away from all the noise and confusion of the city. The best place I could think of to live was in Bishop. I didn't know if I was going to stay, but I felt comfortable when I came here. In fact, I've always felt comfortable here, which is why I've stayed for ten years."

Marty says that being in the Sierra environment has allowed him to concentrate on his writing. "Songwriting requires isolation and concentration. When I lived in the Bay Area, I always had to contend with traffic, crowds, interruptions. Here, if I want to get away, all I have to do is drive a couple of miles into the mountains and I'm all by myself."

In the time that he has lived in the Owens Valley, Marty has played repeatedly at clubs in Mammoth Lakes and in the Lake Tahoe area. His goal now? "I want to get my songs recorded by an established artist, or better still, get signed to a recording contract myself." While he enjoys living in Bishop, he adds, "It's difficult to stay on top of what's happening in the music business if you don't live in Los Angeles or Nashville or New York. I'd like to stay right here in the valley, but I may have to move to the city again to make it in music."

Despite that possibility, Marty Forstenzer says that his real home will always be in the Sierra. "No matter where I have to go in order to pursue my career, I'll always feel that I belong here. Sometimes, when I get a little depressed about something or other, all I have to do to get rid of that feeling is walk out in my backyard and look at the mountains and the sky. When I see all of that, I know that anything is possible." He looks up and smiles. "What more can I say?" □

**Hydro: What Price Power?** *continued*

require stringent environmental studies, both on a single and cumulative basis, on proposed small hydro. With over 70 applications presently on file for the development of small hydro projects in the Eastern Sierra, it is incumbent upon all citizens to remain alert and to voice their views at every forum.

Lest this article appear to be a diatribe against all small hydro projects, let me state that that is not the case. I hope that I have, however, raised warning signals about the "fast buck" artists who would despoil the area and leave nothing but desolation in their wake. We know their kind.

Under certain conditions, I believe that small hydro may benefit the community. If under local control, if environmental concerns have been reviewed carefully, and if the electricity produced is consumed locally at a reasonable rate, it could be beneficial. If, on the other hand, small hydro is operated by an out-of-the-area group, whose only concern is to "take the money and run," then I would refer to hydro as "Hydra." The "Hydra," from Greek mythology, was a monstrous serpent, represented as having nine heads, each of which was replaced by two after being cut off.

My closing thought is that we must be careful not to emulate Esau, the brother of Jacob. The Old Testament tells us that when he was hungry he "sold his birthright for a mess of pottage." He lived to regret that action. Should the citizens of the Eastern Sierra accept small hydro without careful scrutiny, then we, too, may settle for a "mess of pottage" in exchange for our birthright of magnificent scenery and irreplaceable resources. Oh, in case you don't know what a "mess of pottage" is, the closest definition would be a "pot of stew." Not much of a trade, wouldn't you say? And it could happen here. I am neither an environmental zealot, nor an opponent of private enterprise, but we must be wary of exploiters who take much and give little. The residents of the Eastern Sierra must become more motivated by enlightened self-interest, they must prioritize their needs and, most importantly, they must be able to reject those projects which diminish our lifestyle. □

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*Photo by Jim Stroup.*

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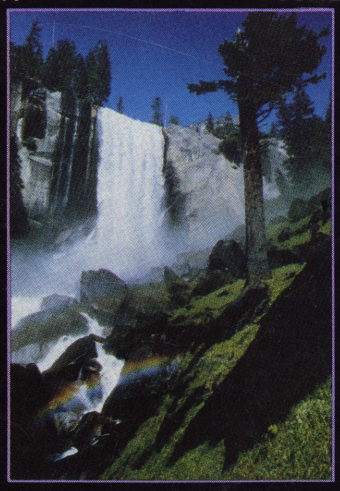

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